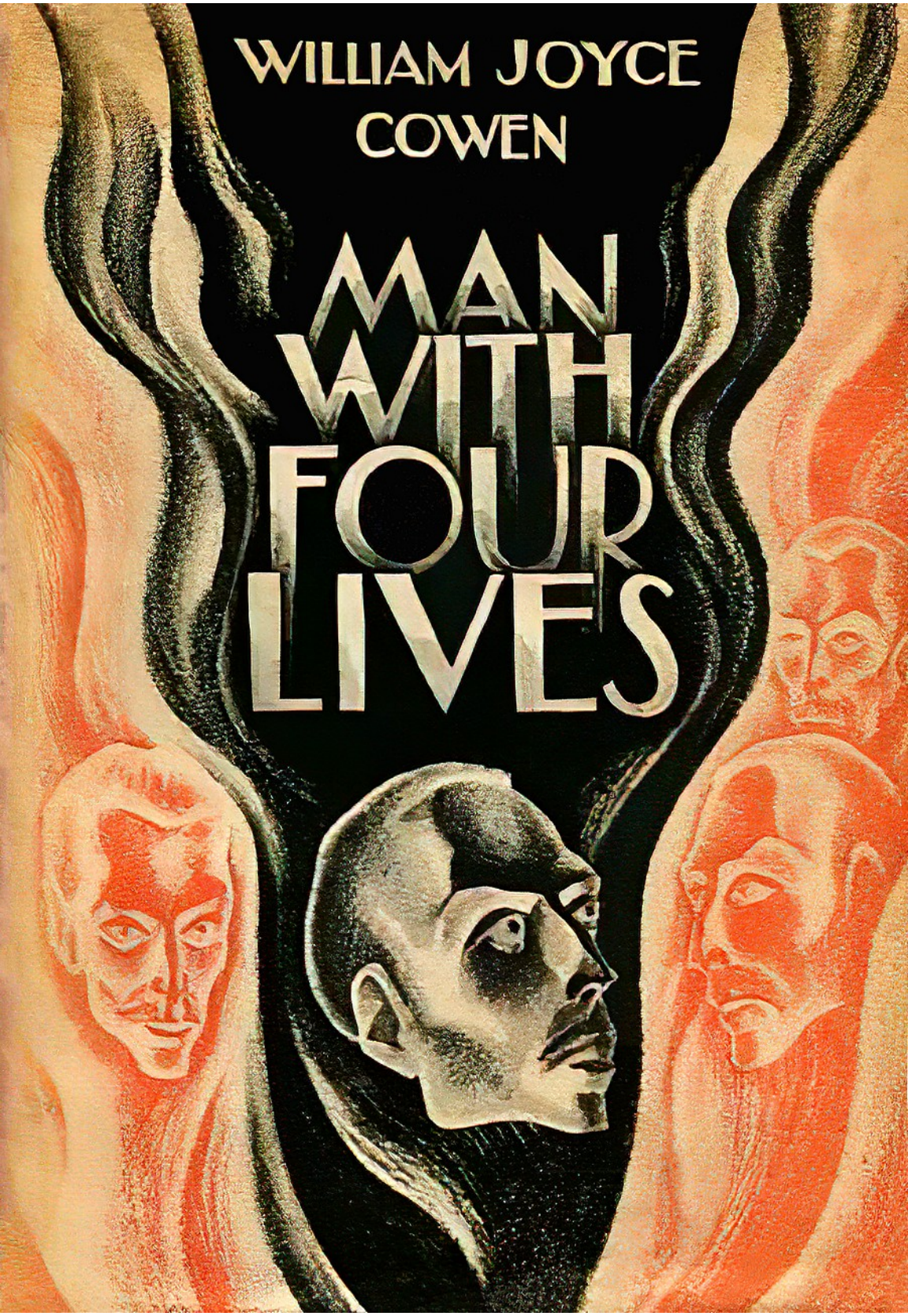
WILLIAM JOYCE
COWEN
MAN
WITH
FOUR
LIVES

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Man with Four Lives

By

William Joyce Cowen

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William Joyce Cowen

MAN WITH FOUR LIVES

Illustrated by Lynd Ward

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LENORE

To Whom I Dedicate These Four
Lives and My Own

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MAN WITH FOUR LIVES

Chapter One

"GENTLEMEN—the King!"

Chairs pushed back suddenly as feet scraped on the hardwood floors. Soft sounds of glasses being hastily filled. August the Fourth. Seventeen years before, the war had stretched out its hands to us on that day. August the Fourth. The annual dinner of the 20th Cavalry Brigade, B. E. F. The ex-officers and their guests, decorations and medals all shimmering, rose to their feet as the chairman rapped sharply on the table

"Gentlemen—the King!"

"The King—God Bless Him!"

The response came heartily. The glasses were drained to the health of that kindly little man in Buckingham Palace. Recovering from a terrific illness, they hoped. It really wasn't his health alone they were drinking. It was to their own health. The health of their fathers and mothers, sisters, brothers, friends and neighbors. The health of the British Empire. Peace. Safety. Freedom. All this they meant when they said, "The King— God Bless Him!"

Performing too many operations in casualty clearing stations, long hours, poor lights, have left me with eyes none too sharp these days. I looked around the horse-shoe table. All ruddy, weather-beaten faces. Hard riders. Hard drinkers. Hard fighters. I knew most of them. Vinton of the Blues. Abercrombie and Dawson of the Tenth. Gruff old Chilton, who

commanded our Field Ambulance before me. The other toasts started. You know what a lot of honors there are to be wet down when soldiers get together. The Army. The Navy. The Air Force. The absent friends. The what-have-yous. Roars of laughter at the same old wheezes. Yet I felt uneasy. Restless. A sense of something unsettled assailed me. That feeling of a dog pulling at one's trouser leg the way they do when they think something is wrong.

The speech-making came to an end. Little groups of threes and fours discussed the past and present over a last glass of port and another cigar. Dawson called to me. To sit down and have a chin wag.

I made an excuse. Perhaps I was restless from sitting too long already. The imaginary dog was worrying the old trouser leg and I had to follow. Chilton overtook me in the cloak-room. He looked at me sharply.

"Feeling queer, George? You shouldn't eat those new-fangled messes. Stick to beef, man! Beef and beer made Britain!"

By the time I had convinced him that I was perfectly well and needed no dietary corrections, we were opposite Charing Cross Station. The Strand was a deserted canyon echoing our footsteps. Pavements wet from the rain which had given way to fog. Twin yellow lights blinked through the mist. A taxi. Chilton hailed it. More like a schoolboy than an impressive general in the Medical Corps he rushed into the roadway, raising his hand. I followed. The cab stopped. As I was

climbing in a sudden bump threw me to the ground. I got up to find Chilton swearing at the driver of the taxi that had collided with ours. Chilton was so thorough. To hear him, one would never suspect his medical training. His swearing sounded like the Army Service Corps. Or perhaps an ammunition column. Both used mules. The driver kept saying, “Sorry, sir— Sorry, sir —”

“Like hell you’re sorry! What are you sorry for?”

“ ’Cause there’s a lady inside, sir, and I think she’s hurt.”

We opened the door. A woman had fallen to the floor, her face turned away from us. A heavy traveling

coat was on the seat and several pieces of excellent luggage were under an outstretched hand. Her left hand, a wedding ring on it. Chilton lifted her up. In the dim light I had the impression of knowing her. Nothing definite. Just the feeling one gets sometimes. My hand searched my overcoat pocket. My first aid kit. Force of habit to carry it now even though I’ve stopped practicing medicine.

Chilton snorted. “Nothing much wrong. She’s stunned by the bump.”

A whiff of sal volatile brought her to. In the dark cab she seemed a pretty woman, of indefinite age. Ripe fruit. A lady, without doubt. She smiled at Chilton. A rather familiar smile.

“Thank you so much. Stupid of me to faint. Do you mind if I go on? I’m in rather a hurry.”

Chilton growled something unintelligible through his mustaches. An old lamb bleating through a lion's mane. I hastily packed the aid kit. Some attempted gallantry died on my lips as my coat sleeve button entangled in a luggage tag and I saw the name. Now I knew. Turning to look at her she recognized me. "George Forrester! It's years since I've seen you!"

Before I could speak she answered my unasked questions.

"I'm rushing to meet my husband. We're back in Switzerland, didn't you know? I'll give Iris a ring next time I come to town. We're terribly happy. Good-bye."

The cab drove off, melting into the fog as I watched. Chilton suddenly grew facetious. "If you're solidifying, do it in Trafalgar Square next to Nelson and the lions."

I let that pass. So many thoughts flooded my mind. Quick flashes crowded back to me. Clear, sharp pictures. Little lantern slides of memory, racing across a mental screen. Her bridal bouquet with the sword running through it. The nervous boy who killed for the first time. The long sieges of nursing. The body lying at the bottom of the crevasse.

"What is too fantastic?"

I looked at Chilton as he spoke. We were in our taxi now, moving west. I had been thinking aloud. He repeated the question.

"What is too fantastic?"

"To-night. This encounter. I should have asked her __"

“Don’t be so damn mysterious, Forrester! Who is she?”

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When Chilton called me by my family name, I knew he was serious. I tried to laugh it off. “Suppose I said that she was a—er—a shadow out of the dim past. A bit of wreckage from the war. A—”

“All rot—your metaphors! A damn pretty woman. Tell me about her.”

He popped his head out of the cab window and ordered the driver to pull up. He paid the fare. We were in front of my own flat. Chilton needed no invitation.

“I’ll have a drink with you.”

He led the way upstairs. Second floor front. I unlocked the door and snapped on the lights. Whiskey and a bottle of Apollinaris stood on the table, flanked by a tray of sandwiches.

“Not too much soda-water. The damn world is full of gas to-day—”

The last words he gulped down with his drink. I filled a glass. Chilton watched me expectantly.

“Well?”

“This is the anniversary of the war, Chilly.”

“Positively brilliant remark, George. You must have heard one of to-night’s speakers mention it. Get on with the story of the woman!”

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“That goes back to the beginning of the war. Did you ever hear of the man with four lives?”

“The man with four lives? Come, George. Inventing a Wilhelm-strasse yarn? Beautiful women spies and all that? The films do it badly enough.”

I drank slowly. Could I tell the whole story? I had never tried to put together the bits that had come to me like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. Chilton was determined to hear the story. He filled his glass again and leaned back in his chair. A Rock of Gibraltar in evening clothes.

“Well?”

“Do you remember young Fenton?”

“Fenton?”

“John Fenton of the 27th Dragoons. Old Fuzzy Fenton’s boy.”

“Oh—yes. He had a bad time out there. Did he have four lives?”

“Don’t be an ass. I’ll have to start at the beginning. There is so much of it. Parts I got from Fenton. Parts from her. Parts from others.”

He nodded understandingly as I lit my pipe.

“I mentioned the anniversary of the war a moment ago because that date started the most important epoch

of my life. Not only the adventure of the war, but that evening I had first performed the operation that you chaps are good enough to call by my name. I was tired out. It had been a long, nerve-racking job. Only the success of it kept me from collapse. I couldn’t go home. I couldn’t stay in the hospital and talk shop.

“I went to the National Sporting Club. Fine boxing there. Live, vital men. Sharp reactions. Good contrast

to the pale body I had lingered over in the operating theater. I came across Waterloo Bridge. Big Ben hammering out eleven strokes over streets teeming with crowds going home from the plays. The newsboys were shouting their papers but I couldn't hear for all the traffic noises. The first bout had started and from my seat near the back of the house the scene was like one of Bellows' lithographs. Two huge men striking at each other in the brilliantly lighted ring. The old referee sitting nearby in his high chair. The white shirt bosoms of the members in front dazzlingly bright against the frame of black coats. Sharp stabs of light as cigarettes were lit. The referee had just warned the fighters about breaking cleanly. Someone pulled at his coat tails. A johnny in staff uniform with a note from the War Office. The old man never took an eye

off the ring as he reached down for the note and read it. He tapped his gong. The fighters stopped, puzzled at the interruption. Seconds climbed into the ring. The gong sounded again. The referee stood up.

" 'Silence, gentlemen?" He wiped his face with a large silk handkerchief before reading the note aloud. " ' "Will all members of His Majesty's Forces on Land and Sea, Regular and Territorial, please join their units immediately. Transportation warrants will not be necessary." God save the King! ' "

"An embarrassed silence for an instant. Then quick whispers. The war! It's come! The war! Someone started the national anthem in a deep throaty voice.

Every man joined in. Every head up. Members. Guests. Referee. Boxers. Seconds.

“ ‘…Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God Save Our King.’ ”

“Going out, an attendant at the door told me the hospital had just called. I got them on the wire. Nothing serious. Just reporting that the case was doing well. I walked down the crowded street. No noise.

No flag waving. Everyone talking seriously. War. War. I turned into Soho. Foreigners walking swiftly. Furtively glancing around before disappearing into doorways. War. War.

“I stepped into a pub. The barmaid was drawing ale for three men. None young and all of them around forty. I wanted to hear how they responded to the news so moved closer.

“ ‘I’m all for givin’ them furriners a lesson. Wot d’you say, Bill?’ ”

“ ‘Right you are, Alf. I remember in South Africa when I was in the Yeomanry—’ ” He made a sword cut with his heavy stick breaking a couple of glasses on the bar to the annoyance of the barmaid.

“ ‘Hey, gents. This ain’t no battlefield—’ ”

“ ‘A-army or-r-ders—’ ” A kilted giant of a recruiting sergeant filled the doorway. “ ‘All members of His Majesty’s Forces will rejoin their units.

Reservists report on the ’Orse-Guards Parade. White’all. Wot abaht ye lads?’ ”

“The three men unconsciously stood at attention. Old soldiers. The loud-spoken one who swung the stick said softly, ‘I’ll have to speak to my missus first.’

“The barmaid broke in coldly. ‘A shillin’ for my glasses, please.’

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“The door from the back room opened. A man with a woman dragging on his arm tried to free himself from her clasp. ‘I’m goin’ with you, sergeant.’

“ ‘Not till he pays me, the—’ ”

“The man broke free. The sergeant roared with laughter. ‘G’arn, lass. You’re daft. There’s a mon’s war on.’

“She spit at the big highlander as the man hid behind him.

“ ‘Good luck to you, sergeant, with cowards like that one for soldiers. I’ll bet you Scots started the war just to get your hands on the King’s shilling.’

“I finished my drink and paid the barmaid an extra shilling for the broken glasses. The others had cleared out silently. She wiped off the bar, smiling politely.

‘“The war has come. Are you goin’, sir?’

“ ‘If they want me. Good-night.’

“ ‘Good-night and good luck, sir.’ ”

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Chapter Two

CHILTON stirred in his chair and poured another drink.

"I missed all that excitement, George, studying that fever bug in Africa. What about the woman? The one in the taxi?"

"I'm coming to that now. A few days later the Royal Army Medical Corps replied to my offer of services. Would I join the 20th Cavalry Brigade at Canterbury? Rank of honorary captain. There I was in the Army. We were busy fitting out. New uniforms. New kits. New men. New equipment. New ambulances. New horses. Dozens of boxes. Hundreds of straps. Thousands of oddments. Millions of things to do. With the help of the regular M. O.s of the cavalry regiments and some old sergeants of the R. A. M. C., things took shape. Intensive training. You were well out of that.

"You remember Gordon, the M. O. of the 27th Dragoons? Great pal of mine. Had me for dinner nightly in the Mess of the 27th. Ours was ghastly.

That's where I met young Fenton. Fine sensitive young boy. Damn good looking, too. Happy. Going to be married to the girl you saw to-night. Lady Audrey Symyns. Lady Hartington's girl. Her father was killed saving John's father from the Fuzzy Wuzzies. Got a posthumous V. C. Strangely enough the children loved each other, quite the exception for fixed marriages. She was a stunner. Came to the barracks several times for

tea. Not the girl anyone would want to leave. Fenton was mad about her, yet keen to get on with the war. Fentons had always been soldiers. In those days we thought a month or two would end it."

Chilton broke in.

"We got up a purse to present the captain coming from Africa if he'd break the ship's record. We were afraid the show would be over before we'd get a chance at it."

"Exactly. Anyway, they advanced the date of the wedding. It brought a crowd which included every regular officer in the Eastern Command who could evade regimental duty. Photographers from the London illustrated papers and all that sort of thing. The regulars wore their dress uniforms. The last time, I think. We volunteers conscious of our new khaki, the

leather Sam Browne feeling larger than the belt of Orion. The officers of the 27th formed the usual arch with their swords outside the church door.

"The girl was something to remember. Head held high. Violet eyes happily shining under the lacy wedding veil which melted into the train sweeping the scarlet carpet. Fenton's sensitive face glistened as they walked under the crossed swords. His expression, like hers, had the mystic feeling of a religious beatitude. At the door of the carriage they stopped. Audrey threw her bouquet to her bridal attendants. She tossed it high. Major Bole, a dry old stick, instinctively raised his sword and the point impaled the flowers. I can still see his embarrassed face as he hurriedly disengaged his

blade and handed the flowers to the nearest bridesmaid. And her astonished face with its pretty blushes.

“As the carriage drove off a dispatch rider shattered the scene with his motorcycle. He saluted the nearest officer.

“ ‘Urgent message for Colonel Long, sir.’

“The colonel read the note and called Captain Burke, the adjutant.

“ ‘Will you please have all these gentlemen return to barracks at once?’

“He dropped his voice to a whisper.

“ ‘Cancel all leave. We embark at Dover sometime to-night.’

“‘Very good, sir. What about young Fenton, sir?’

“ ‘It’s hard luck, Burke, but we can’t help it. Give him an hour or two before letting him know.’

“I went towards the carriage hired to take Gordon and myself to the wedding breakfast at Fenway House, the Fenton home. Gordon couldn’t go. The spectators lingered in little groups outside the church aware that something was wrong and wondering about it. An elderly woman moved out of my way and curtsied.

“ ‘A bonnie bride, sir, but I don’t like the sword going through the bouquet. My mother used to say…’

“A man took her by the elbow before she could quote her ancient parent. I drove off through the pleasant countryside of Kent. The day was beautiful. One couldn’t imagine that a war had started. Singing birds. Green fields. Dazzling sunshine.

“I thought of the old woman’s foreboding. Then of the adage, ‘Happy is the bride the sun shines on.’ She was a happy bride. Would the war leave her happy? We passed Broome Hall. The stone eagles on the gates stood guard while the master, Lord Kitchener,

was making war in London. A turning to the left and we drove through the chestnut trees bordering the drive, Fenway House before us. You know the sort of home it was. Just now it’s fashionable to sneer at big establishments because no one can afford them and few are capable of their management these days.”

Reminiscence flooded Chilton.

“Damn good cook they had, too. Fuzzy Fenton paid him a ridiculous sum. Best savories in England. The Viceroy of India sent for his curry recipe in 1908. King Edward spoke of the souffles.”

“They still had the same cook. Marvelous wedding breakfast. I can recall it so clearly. Places for a hundred-odd. Worthy of a Roman emperor. Audrey cut the gigantic cake with John’s sword. After they left the table the guests drifted into the drawing room, library or on to the terrace and lawns. There seemed to be a footman and a bottle of Cliquot wherever one looked.

“I stood on the terrace talking to a bridesmaid. A pretty bridesmaid. The one who had got Audrey’s bouquet. I had just asked her if she was superstitious when I heard a laugh behind me and a voice say, ‘Here’s to Mrs. Fenton.’ I turned and looked into

the room through the open window. Audrey had taken off her veil. She sat on a little bronze cannon out of Nelson's *Victory* drinking champagne, all white and pink against the banners and weapons on the dark panels of the gun-room. John dropped the bottle into a silver wine cooler at her feet and as he put his arms around her I pointed out to my pretty companion the great shady oak trees and suggested a stroll."

"Not a very modern technique, George."

"Modern enough. I married her later. If you wake her up with your noise, you'll never hear the end of this story. It's just like a patchwork quilt. Audrey told parts of it to my missus. In France John would ramble on to me about it for hours. I let him talk. It soothed him instead of having the usual opposite effect.

"Where was I? Oh. It seems that the older Fentons were clearing out of the house after dinner. Going to Scotland for a month. John had a fortnight's leave for his honeymoon and he and Audrey were planning each day. Then Audrey spoke of the war. She was afraid of it. John tried to laugh it off. It wouldn't amount to anything. The Army and Navy would finish their mobilization. The politicians would make lots of noise. Then everything would settle down. Except

the taxes. They'd go up! But it would be a lark to go to war. She was afraid. She repeated it. He pointed out that it wouldn't last long if they did go. He spoke of other short wars. The Sudan, for instance. Audrey's father had been killed in the Sudan. John could have bitten his tongue off for his blunder. To cover his

awkward apologies he drew her towards the wall hung with swords. The swords of the lucky Fentons. His great-grandfather's sword from Delhi. His grandfather's sword from Waterloo. His father's sword from South Africa. She wished John's sword already hung with the others. She was afraid. Terribly afraid. He tried to reassure her. The lucky Fentons. Known since there was a British Army for their good fortune. Lucky Fentons and he the luckiest of them all.

"A servant knocked on the door and brought in an envelope.

" 'O. H. M. S. Secret and confidential. Lieut. John Fenton, 27th Dragoons.'

"John started pocketing the letter. A prank. Someone at barracks having a little practical joke. Audrey insisted that he open it.

" 'Report to barracks immediately for embarkation before midnight.' Captain Burke had signed it and in the lower corner had pencilled the word, 'Sorry.'

"The gay, brave look slowly left John's face. A chill came over his spirit, looking into her two loving eyes that just managed to hold the tears back. There were many things to say. Things he would have liked to say. Many things he couldn't say. Being British, all he did say was,

" 'I must go, you see. Will you help me put my kit together?'

"Fat old Packenham, who later originated the slogan Eat Less Bread, happened to get a rush of patriotism in the drawing room at that particular

moment. He sat on the edge of the piano bench and started playing ‘God Save the King.’ Not one verse but two. We came back to the terrace wondering what all the noise was about to find a lot of solemn red-faced people open-mouthed in song. The gunroom window framed Audrey and John. Their eyes searched the future as their lips moved in unison with those in the other room singing the second verse:

“ ‘Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks,
On Thee our hopes we fix,
God save us all.’ ”

Chapter Three

"HAVE A sandwich, Chilly?" He took a big bite.

"Strange looking back at it, George. That sort of thing was happening all over Europe seventeen years ago. I couldn't help thinking of it at dinner to-night while Bingo Churchill gassed about Britain and England and England and Britain. My mind went back to the far-off spots in our Colonies. Fellows quitting sheep stations in Australia. Ranches in Canada. Plantations in Ceylon. Farms in Africa. Goods vans in Austria loaded with troops. People handing in packages of food and tobacco. Little groups of children waving flowers as they sang their 'Lieber Kaiser Franz.'

"Or a garrison town in Germany. A wagon train taking in supplies. Civilians awkward in new uniforms. A regimental band marching out of a barrack yard playing 'Der Wacht am Rhine' while everyone stood ramrod stiff at attention. Belgians marching along a poplar-covered road to the tune of the "Brabagonne" as King Albert reviews them.

"A town in France. An army motor car cutting

through the dusk of market day. An officer calling for monsieur le maire. The village crier running to the mairie followed by the musicians from a traveling fair. Someone sticking military posters on the bulletin board over notices of cattle and farm sales. The crier ringing his bell and croaking… 'Ordre de

mobilization, messieurs. La guerre est arrivee. Vive la France…' and the musicians squeaking out 'The Marseillaise.' "

"Damn good sandwiches, George. Pass the whiskey."

"And Russia, Chilton. Russia. It must have been something like I saw in Moscow in 1910. A crowd waited outside a big church. There were priests with ikons and burning censers standing before the door. People shouted and hooves clattered on the cobble-stones as a sotnya of Cossacks came at the gallop, yanking the wretched horses to a dead stop on the very toes of the priests. Then sitting in their saddles with folded arms and bowed heads they received the blessing of the church."

"They all had the Gott mit Uns touch, eh?"

"Precisely. And they all needed Him. At least they called on Him often enough. Oh God! God help me! God damn them! My God! Their first and last

thought. God must have had a hard time deciding who needed his help most. I did my share of wanting Him when the shells started dropping around our field ambulance for the first time. I remembered all my prayers. Strangely enough, that day I saw the next step in the story I'm trying to tell you. Corbin had ordered me to take a section and stand by near to the 27th Dragoons who were in close reserve. We started at a slow trot. Some high explosive burst to our right and we were off at the gallop like a Royal Horse Artillery battery instead of a sedate Ambulance.

“The 27th was echeloned in a hollow behind Hill 42, with A Squadron on the left front. Colonel Long was talking seriously to Major Boyne, going over a divisional order. They were all dismounted. I trotted over to where John was standing at his horse’s head studying a map. A terrific rattle nearby made my horse buck. I fell flat on my back, wondering for an instant who was shooting off strings of giant firecrackers before it came to me that I was under one of our machine guns.”

“I know that feeling, George. Always made me jump when they went off unexpectedly. There’s something so damn vicious in that rat-tat-tat.”

“Gives me the shivers to think of them even now,

Chilly. Anyway, I had just time for a word with John when a messenger galloped up to Colonel Long. The sergeant trumpeter got the colonel’s signal. He lifted his trumpet and blew Prepare to Mount. The notes weren’t finished before the three squadron trumpeters picked it up. Every man’s left foot searched for its stirrup. Major Boyne swung into the saddle and shouted ‘Mount.’ John and the other A Squadron officers echoed him. The trumpets in unison sounded Walk March. The 2,7th moved forward. So did my horse, a sociable nag. I tried to catch him. The brute would graze until I got near, then off he’d go again. His reins entangled in a low tree near the crest. As I caught him I heard another rattle. A different rattle. The 27th were drawing their swords. What a thrill to see the blades leap into the air. Did you ever see

swords drawn for action? Not for maneuvers like those in the Long Valley near Aidershot. Drawing swords to use them?"

"Only once, George. I saw a Canadian squadron go in on the Somme in '16. Went over to see their brigadier, Jack Seely, near Cappy."

"Then you know the feeling that comes over one at the sight. The shrapnel broke overhead. I tied

my horse and crawled up the slope to watch the show through my field glasses. The shelling grew heavier. Machine gun bullets droned over my head like lazy bees ready to sting. A puff of smoke in the valley below called my attention to an enemy battery trying to find the range of A Squadron as it started downward. Major Boyne waved his sword. The signal for extended order. The double lines of galloping men spread out like fans rippling in a dancer's hands.

"John was ahead of his troop like a master of fox-hounds, leading the field on a big Irish hunter. The horses were all excited. Pulling at the reins and throwing their heads with the joy of running. The other three guns of the battery were popping off, dropping their sights to fire point blank. The sweep of the troops downhill made hard shooting for the German gunners. The shrapnel caught an occasional man who dropped suddenly from the saddle. It was an amazing thing to watch.

"You know that big cyclorama on the battle field of Waterloo? It was like being in there and having the figures suddenly come to life. John stood up in his stirrups, half turning to the men behind him as he shouted a command. They reached the flat ground in

front of the guns. Every horse responded to the spur as the riders brought their sword points down into line. The gun firing at Fenton's troop jammed. Its crew seized rifles or revolvers.

"A tall blond German officer appeared from nowhere. For a second I saw him clearly. Handsome

chap. He fired his big Luger pistol at Fenton. Luckily John's charger stumbled. The bullet missed. The German leaped at John to drag him from the saddle. A brave devil. The horse recovered his footing. John's blade went through the man's body. The German seized the sword hilt with both hands and hung on by the elbows to the saddle wallets as the horse galloped on. As John tried to disengage his weapon the man's hands loosened. On the little finger of the right hand was a large gold signet ring. A unicorn's head arising from a coronet. John told me this later when he described the man in what detail he could from their momentary meeting. The body dropped in a heap to the ground.

"I heard a great shout over to the left and saw B Squadron coming in on the flank of the battery which had now ceased firing. The gun team drivers who tried to get away with their horses were either surrounded or shot. In a few minutes our men had three

of the guns coming back toward me. The fourth gun was hit by a shell as they were getting it started. Four men killed. The enemy's supporting batteries had withheld their fire for fear of hitting their own men but when they saw us making off with their guns the shrapnel sprayed furiously.

"Boyne's squadron went on for about a quarter mile. The rally sounded. John told me that he couldn't think of anything but the face of the man he had killed. His first one, and the war just beginning. Boyne called John sharply to get his troop in hand. Then they came

galloping back. Extended order by troops and going as fast as they could. They had stirred up a hornets' nest which was pouring machine gun bullets along with the shrapnel. Over the crest they came, grateful for the shelter of the dead ground behind it. They just reached safety as the enemy found the range of the hill top. We set up a dressing station. Forty had slight wounds. Three serious cases. Abdominal. About twenty had gone west out there.

"I looked up from bandaging the sergeant-major's arm to see Fenton staring at his saddle wallets. He had the strangest look on his face. Boyne came along to have a little shell splinter taken out of his leg and

the sergeant-major said to him, 'Did you see the way Mr. Fenton handled his man? A clean thrust, sir.'

"Boyne smiled. 'What else do you expect from a Fenton, sergeant-major? Send a galloper to Colonel Long with my compliments and tell him we'll be ready to move in ten minutes. And send the casualty report to Captain Burke. Ouch! Glad that didn't go any deeper. Thanks, Forrester. If you have any brandy in your kit, spot Fenton a little. The lad seems shaken.'

"I took my flask. His horse was grazing, girth loosened. John's eyes still fixed on the saddle wallets. Looking over his shoulder I saw an identity disc, caught by its string in the saddle straps. The name on it was Leutnant W. v. Hartman. 24th Regt. Artillerie. Abtg. 5.

"I touched John's shoulder and he whirled, startled. I could see his nerves were on edge. A drop of the old

cognac I picked up in Calais would fix him up. As he slowly drank the brandy I thought of my first venture in the dissecting room. My scalpel had seemed as long as his sword and I had closed my eyes when the steel touched flesh. Made me properly sick, too. The trumpets sounded again. The enemy were withdrawing with our division in close pursuit and away we went across the open country."

Chapter Four

"A GREAT feeling, George. Fighting in the open. I had a bit of it towards the end of the war, you know. When I first reached the division it was already in the trenches. Wet. Mud. B-r-r! Pass the bottle. Makes me cold when I think of it now! 1914. '15. '16."

"Sixteen! What a winter that was. Working parties. Sniping parties. Wiring parties."

"Those old dugouts we took over from the French near St. Pierre Vast Woods. Filthy holes, weren't they?"

"Foul. If you remember, we had moved into some dugouts near Maurepas Ravine. Just before Christmas in 1916. John was expecting his leave any day. The first. He had started once for England just before the gas attack at Ypres but was stopped at Boulogne. They called everybody back then. Now he was as happy as a schoolboy. The restrictions hadn't started yet on everything at home. He and Audrey looked forward to hunting three days a week for a fortnight. They would dine and dance and look at the world

through rose-colored glasses, making up for the interrupted honeymoon.

"His father had sent him a half dozen pheasants and a case of good port. That night he gave a dinner. Major Boyne sent his man to Corbie for a basket of oysters. Colonel Long produced two quarts of bubbly. Gordon had some Napoleon brandy. I leave it to you if that

wasn't a dinner to have in a dugout. John was in great spirits. I looked at him closely as he gaily sung the choruses of George Robey's song to the music of a gramophone record. You remember the one, Chilly?… 'So I stopped—and I looked—and—' "

" '. . . and I listened!' I know. From the Bing Boys. Everyone sang it. Tra-la-la—Tra-la-la—Tra-la-la-la. Remember the verse that went '. . . and the sound seemed to come from the ground—some one said do—some one said don't—some one said will—some one said won't…' ha-ha."

"Right. John sung it twice. We all roared as he took a burnt cork and made those bushy eyebrows like Robey. I was glad to see him that way. None of the old reflexes that had made him start with horror at a sudden word or touch. None of that haunted look in his eyes when anyone spoke of killing. Watching

him perform so gaily made me think of the long talks we had had. Killing. Death. We came back to those topics so often. Killing. Death. As a soldier from a long line of soldiers he believed it right to kill in war even though he didn't like it. He had often fired at men since trench warfare started. Always at long range. He may have killed some, too. He wasn't sure. Anyway, that wasn't the same as killing face to face. Cold steel plunging in. Hot blood spurting out. He shuddered whenever he thought of it. John felt ashamed of his feelings. Tried to keep them from everyone.

"Through the chance of sleeping one night in the same room with him at the Tete de Boeuf at Abbeville

I stumbled on his secret. He had a screaming fit. When I found the reason I was able to help him a lot. He needed a safety valve. I understood. The dreams were recurrent. He would come to see me the day after one, using all his will power to appear calm. Inside the man was seething from the emotional strain of dreaming that a big blond German was clutching at his neck and hanging from it by both hands. The face belonged to the man he had killed in that first charge the 27th made in 1914, but when he tried to

look closely it would fall to the ground and roll out of reach. Then it would change shape and become the head of a unicorn arising out of a coronet. A clear case of dreams brought on by guilt and remorse which John never even suspected to be hidden somewhere in his mind. Guilt and remorse due to unconscious sex conflict."

"Right, George. No doubt superinduced by shell-shock. I use that word in its broadest sense. We had a lot of it at Doehampton after the Armistice."

"I don't agree with you, old man. To include shell-shock implies mental pressure from war strain. Faulty re-adjustment. John's case was different. Strictly subconscious conflict. He had never consummated his marriage, you know.

"Let me see. Where was I? The dinner, wasn't it? About ten o'clock we were just settling down to a hand of bridge when an order came from Brigade H. Q. for an emergency wiring party. Our front line had been strafed all afternoon and evening and the wire was flat.

We expected raids. They were short of men up front so along with the other cavalry divisions we had to furnish men to do the Army chores. Captain Burke came in from the orderly room dugout next door

to tell the colonel that Major Tilbury, whose turn it was for a forward party, was abed with a touch of flu. Captain Drury was up with a sniping party so the job fell to John. Lieutenant Kelly and thirty men were told off to go along.

"I went back to the Field Ambulance to get my reports done and was listening to our quartermaster's complaints about the shortage of strawberry jam when I heard a chorus singing dolefully as they passed my dugout— 'I want to go 'ome.' You know, one of those mournful things the Tommies loved. I popped my head out. John called to me gaily as he passed—'I hope the pheasants are sitting well'—and laughed as I shouted, 'Good-luck.' Kelly saluted as he passed me and the night blanketed the party. Not a hard thing to do. It was one of those damn black nights that made the yellow light of a match seem like a white streak. I went back to my work. The rest Kelly told me a few hours later when he brought John back, blood-stained from head to foot and raving like a maniac."

"What was it? Seems like shell-shock to me."

"Something much more horrible. Something that had gone deep into his subconscious. There was this handsome boy, looking like a fiend, a terrible expression

on his face as he struggled to free his hands which had been tied behind his back with his own revolver lanyard. But I'm getting ahead of my story. It seems that they went out in front of the 32nd Battalion, North Kent Regiment's trenches. John's party had got the stakes driven with only occasional machine gun bursts to disturb them. It was unusually quiet for that sector. The sort of quiet that makes one uneasy. They hoped a bombardment would start down the line to cover the noises a wiring party can't help making. The wire was half strung when the Very lights went up across the way, dazzling those in No Man's Land with brilliant flood. The wiring party dropped to the ground, intending to finish the work when the flares went out.

"Then a machine gun barrage dropped on our trenches behind them. The enemy's artillery opened in support, the sure sign of a raid. Since they were caught out there, Fenton decided to put up a fight. He sent word down the thin line of men not to fire unless they had to. That would give away their position. Use the bayonet. Luckily they lay in a bit of dead ground. Just enough of a hollow to give them shelter as the enemy's stuff passed over. The German artillery, which could be counted on to keep to its usual fire

routine, now shifted its frame of fire towards our support lines. Their machine guns kept raining bullets on our trenches. Our gunners replied, dropping a leaden curtain in front of our position so the little party couldn't move to front or rear. A couple of men were

hit, maybe from our own guns firing short. At least that is what they always complained.

"The bombardment grew into a terrific din. Then the advance of the enemy came over. The wiring party lay still until the attackers poured through the gap in the wire. There was a sharp scuffle, both sides using the bayonet. It must have been a great surprise for the enemy to find resistance outside of our lines. John, whose German was fluent, heard one of their under-officers cursing his vanguard as the fighting went on, for not discovering our party beforehand.

"The attackers were brave enough but our men had the advantage of getting the Germans crowded into a small space. They fought hard to clear us out, but the delay hung up their plans long enough for our gunners to catch their main body. There were yells and howls of pain. Then someone out there whistled a signal for retreat and back they went carrying their dead and wounded with them. John heard the Feldwebel

shout to be sure to get everyone. He stood counting his men as they came out of the wire, calmly as if on the barrack square. 'Einz, zwei, drei—' A bullet clipped him as he said, 'Sieben,' and they carried him off. Seven wasn't his lucky number, I guess. Fenton took advantage of the momentary lull that followed as their gunners held off firing, afraid of hitting their own men. Moving quickly, he retired his own party, half of whom were wounded, bringing the bodies of three Germans. They wanted to take the corpses where they could be searched for identification as G. H. Q. had

been pounding us every day to get accurate knowledge of what troops were opposite us. When Kelly got back into the trenches of the North Kent Regiment he found that one of the three Germans was still alive, unconscious from bayonet wounds through his middle. He had officer's shoulder straps on his tunic but no marks of his regiment, brigade or division. Neither did the two dead men.

"It was just about that time, you know, when raiding parties were sent out without regimental badges or their personal identity discs so that the other side could get no information from the dead. The telephone in the dugout rang asking for details of the raid and ordering that every effort be made to get information.

"John had been in the dugout with the company commander of the North Kents. As he came out Kelly said, 'One is alive. An officer, I think. He won't last long and he won't talk.' A sergeant broke in, 'Pardon me, sir, but a drop of rum might start him talking. Shall I give it to him?' John was about to say, 'Yes,' when Kelly told him it would be fatal to give spirits to anyone with abdominal wounds."

"Nasty cases. I've seen many a poor devil sitting with his guts in his lap. What did Fenton do then? Anyone would know that alcohol would increase the heart action and start a hemorrhage that would finish the blighter off."

"Fenton knew it, I imagine. He wasn't inhuman you know, but orders came first. 'Sorry,' he said. 'We need

the information.' The sergeant knelt down in the dark trench with his canteen. The wounded man slobbered and gulped as the burning liquid hit his throat. John spoke gruffly in German. 'Ihr Regiment?' A voice thick with suffering answered automatically. 'Fünftes Garde Regiment, Herr General.'

"Poor wretch! He thought he was being spoken to by one of his own superior officers. Fenton smiled grimly at the success of his ruse. Fifth Guard Regiment!

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It meant that the shock troops of their 45th Division were opposite us. Hard fighters. Second to none. Iron discipline like our own Guards. Our headquarters would be pleased to know where they were. He whispered to the North Kent officer to phone the information in while he tried for more. 'Hurry, sir,' the sergeant said, 'he's bleeding something awful.'

"The crumpled figure was barely outlined as it lay in the slimy black trench. Nobody would make a light without bringing on a deluge of lead, so they missed the horror of seeing the German. Even the sergeant couldn't distinguish the dying man's face as John continued his questions. 'Wie heissen Sie, Herr Leutnant?' The sergeant put the canteen to the cracked lips and the voice, weaker now, answered with difficulty, 'Hartman,—Excellenz—Leutnant von Hartman——bitte— sagen Sie meinem Vater—'

"Kelly told me that the wildest change came over Fenton's face. He looked like a maniac as he grabbed the hand torch from Kelly and flashed it on the

prisoner. The arc of light fell on the right hand of the German, lifted stiffly to his forehead in salute. Glowing in the beam was a gold signet ring, bearing the crest of a unicorn’s head arising from a coronet!”

Chilton gave a surprised whistle.

"Phe-ew! That must have given Fenton a turn!"

"I should say so. It was all he could do to keep from screaming. He dropped to his knees, his face on the level of Hartman's which stood out in the spotlight like the head of John the Baptist on Salome's platter. There was the face of the man he had killed in 1914. There was the same ring. There was the same name. The name. The ring. The face. No doubt of it. Fenton swore that to me later. A handsome face. Aristocratic. Nose slightly aquiline. Wide set blue eyes. Beautiful teeth white and shining despite the blood and dirt and rum in his mouth. Blond hair cropped close and a mustache of the same color turned up slightly at the ends.

"I'm giving you these details as completely as I can put them together because I want you to remember them later. The face was set in a wooden expression. Lips drawn back in the slight smile junior officers have for their seniors. Eyes staring straight ahead, unseeing. Right hand pressed rigidly in salute against the temple. A sharp burst of machine gun bullets drove everyone flat against the parapet for protection. Everyone except John who still knelt on the muddy duckboard, fasciliated.

Someone knocked the torch out of his hand, throwing the trench into instant darkness. The German spoke again. One could scarcely hear the words over the sounds of the firing. 'Sage—meinem—Vater—Leutnant von Hartman——Fünftes Garde Regiment ——zu Befehl—Herr—Gen…' The voice trailed off

to nothing as the man's breathing stopped. Fenton grabbed the shoulders and shook them. 'Speak, man, speak! Sagetwas! Speak! Speak! You're not dead, man. Do you hear? My God, I've killed him! I've killed him! I've killed you again, Hartman. Do you hear that? What are you going to do about it? Speak, damn you, speak!'

"Kelly thought he'd shake the man's head loose from his body. He tried to interfere. The blood which had been spurting in hot jets while the heart was pumping, now trickled onto John's hands. He sprang to his feet, trying to rub off the stains, for all the world like a Lady Macbeth in khaki. Kelly and the sergeant tried to get him away by force. They had the devil's own time getting his revolver from him. He wanted to go out into No Man's Land to find more Hartmans. They were calling to him. They were grinning at him over the parapet. They were saluting him from under the

duckboards. It took four men to tie his hands behind him with the lanyard of his own revolver. He was a bit calmer by the time they brought him to our Ambulance.

"Kelly told me what had happened. I undid John's hands. He asked to speak to me alone. Major Lovell was commanding the Ambulance during your absence. He thought it very irregular. Said the man should be committed to a hospital by a medical board. Temporary insanity, at least. I offered to take the responsibility. I knew it could be explained to you."

“H-mmph. You were right. Lovell was always a stuffy old ass. Used the King’s Regulations for a pillow and covered himself at night with Army Orders. Where was I at the time?”

“Either in England getting your C. M. G. for your experiments in making the tsetse fly sterile, or else at Le Treport calming your nerves drinking Chateau-neuf-de-Pape and flirting with that pretty widow who owned the Hotel de la Poste. Something noble, I’m sure.”

“Ha-ha. I also might have been at G. H. Q. in Montreuil trying to get promotion for a certain black-guard of a medical officer.”

“Touche. At any rate, Kelly went to make the reports. John came into my dugout. A changed man if there ever was one. His eyes saw nothing. His body shook. I poured out a stiff drink for him. The liquor and a hypo of morphine relaxed him a little. We sat down. Bit by bit the story came out. Details that had transpired in split seconds were permanently photographed on his brain with amazing clarity. He finally fell asleep. Snored from sheer exhaustion. Watching him I thought of his wedding day. His high hopes. His pride of race. His wife. Audrey. Audrey and John. Poor girl. Poor boy. I could see what their life together was going to be when he went home. He would try so hard to keep her from knowing this thing that had disfigured his mind. Then something would happen suddenly. He’d be off his guard and Audrey

would find out what was wrong. His house of cards would come tumbling down around their ears."

"Grounds for divorce, you know. Insanity—of a kind."

"I know. Not that she would do it, but the fact remained a possibility. I hoped he'd have a quiet night and started to get between my blankets. A half hour of sleep. He suddenly sat up, screaming and waving

his arms. 'He's here again! Hartman. Hartman! Pick up your head. Pick it up! It will get all muddy in the trench! Hartman!'

"I splashed cold water on him, same as one does with a somnambulist. It took another hypo to quiet him enough to talk to. He was in a fearful state mentally. Couldn't be argued with nor crossed. Everything had to be inferred or suggested to prevent upsetting him. Nothing could change his opinion. As far as he was concerned, Hartman had come to life again.

"Why? That's what he wanted to know. Why? I tried to sidetrack him. Suggested racial resemblances. Similarity of names. 'No. No. It was the same man,' John said. 'I'd swear to it anywhere. Why, he didn't have an identity disc! That proves he was the same man, see? The first time I killed him his identity disc caught in my saddle wallets. I have it somewhere in my kit now.'

"I tried to tell him that raiders from both sides were going out without identity discs. He waved that aside as pure nonsense. 'No one but a dead man is without

an identity disc in this war. If he'd been a live man, a different man, he'd have his identity disc. Identity

disc. That's the answer. Identity disc.' He repeated the words so often that I began to loathe them. You know how it is with reiteration. Finally the damn words start you doing it yourself. Identity disc! Oh hell! In desperation I asked him, 'What will Audrey say when you tell her about Hartman?' Audrey! It struck him like a blow. To tell Audrey. He couldn't do that. He'd rather die first. Anything but that. She wouldn't understand. No one would understand. It wasn't the sort of thing one could sit down to explain. What would a medical board say? There were tears in his eyes at that possibility.

"That is just a bit of what I went through that night with John. There was no sleep for me. Next morning I compounded a felony by filling him full of serum and shipping him away as a contagious case before you could get back, or before Major Boyne could talk to him."

"So that's why I never knew anything of this before! I had a recollection of seeing Fenton's name in a sick report but it had no particular significance. Well, well. Damn clever of you, George! Pass me the matches."

Chapter Five

"VIMY RIDGE—Arras—and the blowing up of the big ammunition dump near Artois kept us busy after that, you remember. Not much time to think of John. I'd heard that he was home so I hoped it was all right again. Further particulars I didn't get until my leave came around in June."

"When you asked permission to get married. A June bridegroom."

"As you said at the time. Very original. We spent our honeymoon at Hythe. Not so far from Folkestone. Golfing. Swimming. We drove over to Canterbury one day to pick up some things left at the barracks. On the way back Iris suggested stopping at Fenway House on the chance that Audrey and John might be at home. I was of two minds. Anxious to see him again and to know how things had worked out, at the same time afraid they were all wrong. Iris made up my mind for me by turning the car into the chestnut drive. Ahead of us I could see some figures on the terrace that rose and came to the stone balustrade at the sound of the car.

Expecting guests, I thought, and suggested to Iris that we turn back.

" 'Nonsense,' she said, 'we'll only stop for a minute and they'll be glad to see us.' "

"Tell me, George, did Iris know er-er—this trouble of John's? Had you told her?"

“No, as a matter of fact, outside of a consultation with Fenton’s Swiss doctor and the correspondence with Guthrie in London on some aspects of the case, I’ve told no one of it to this day. Wait a minute. John told something of it to Major Boyne.”

“Poor Boyne. A hand grenade blew him to bits in 1917,1 think.”

“December. Then an airplane dropped a bomb on the hospital. They buried him in an oat sack. I’ll come back to that in a minute or two. Where was I?”

“Driving up to Fenway House, I think.”

“Oh yes. Audrey, with John’s father and mother came to welcome us. They had been expecting their physician, it seems. Fuzzy Fenton was in uniform, looking quite imposing with his red tabs and gold braid. On the War Office Staff in London and just waiting for a talk with their doctor before going back to town. Full of good cheer and patriotism. Mrs. Fenton, the old dear, basking in her husband’s glory.

“Audrey looked a beauty. Matured a little but utterly charming. I asked for John. He’d gone for a stroll a moment before, it seems. He often did that. Long strolls. Long silences. Otherwise he seemed well though still a bit nervous. Nothing would do but that we spend the rest of the day there. We drifted inside. Everyone chatty and bright on the surface, but I sensed a feeling of unrest. A feeling of mystery and frustration. Audrey tried to get me alone. It was some time before she could manage to send the older Fentons and Iris off to look at the rhododendrons. We

went into the gunroom. The same room that I saw her in with John the day of their marriage. She came right to the point with a direct question.

“ ‘What is wrong with John?’ I made an evasive answer. ‘Tell me the truth. You were with him so much in France. He told me that you helped him a lot. Please tell me.’ ”

“Damn it, George. What a devilish spot to get into.”

“Wasn’t it? I temporized with a medical phrase. Tried to make it sound very important. Audrey laughed bitterly.

“ ‘Rubbish. Don’t give me Latin hogwash for jumpy

nerves. I know all that and lots more. Sit down and I’ll tell you some of the things I know. Light your pipe and be comfortable.’

“She started at the beginning. The day John came home. A cold, rainy day. She hadn’t heard a word from him for weeks. A most unusual thing. A vague report came that he was in a hospital with some slight ailment. His mother had gone to Scotland to visit her sister and Audrey was sitting writing to her. She had just put down on the paper… ‘I’d begin to worry about not hearing from John if he weren’t one of the lucky Fentons…’ when something made her turn. She thought for a moment that it was an optical illusion as John stood there silently, devouring her with his eyes.

“The dark, grey room seemed flooded with sunshine in the moment of sheer ecstasy as they kissed each other. She could say nothing but ‘John, John,’

repeating his name over and over in her delight at seeing him again, of holding him in her arms. The question pounding in her mind was, ‘How long will he stay home? How long will I be able to keep him here where he’ll be safe?’ He must have felt her question. Speaking very slowly he said, ‘I’m to be home for awhile, Audrey.’ Her

happiness seemed complete. ‘You mean to say you can stay a long time?’ she asked him. ‘Not just for a fortnight?’ He shook his head. ‘The doctors say I need a good rest. Nerves all shot to pieces. No excitement. No violent exercise or pleasures.’ He paused at that and looked at her steadily. ‘You won’t mind having me here?’ The full meaning of what he said didn’t occur to her then. ‘Just one of the lucky Fentons,’ she cried, when old Sir Hubert burst in on them. You know, old Hubert Packenham, the Do-Your-Bit-and-Eat-Less-Bread man.

“He’d seen John on the road and just dashed in for a word of greeting. The old chatterbox. Full of high spirits and questions. How was dear old Douglas? Meaning Haig, as if John palled around with the commander-in-chief. Charming man to serve under, he thought. What did the brave boys in the trenches think of Lloyd George’s speech on the Irish question? Was it true that the German officers took women into their front line trenches? Wasn’t everyone in France shocked at the wife of a cabinet minister playing tennis with the prisoners in England? He scarcely waited for

an answer as he rattled along. Consolidating the home front. No exemptions. Sixty shells every sixty seconds.

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She could have screamed as the old fool ran on. It seemed as if he'd never stop, while John's face grew harder and harder. He looked as if he would strike the old man, who finally ran out of steam and shook their hands a half dozen times as he left.

"They were utterly exhausted. She didn't know if she should laugh or cry. John was sweet. He put his arms around her. 'Don't mind the old buffer. If he didn't keep the war going he'd have nothing to do?

"They talked on after that, all impersonally, she told me. They decided to dine without dressing and have an early night. She quickly ordered a few things he was fond of while he got out of uniform. At the table he was hungry, so conversation languished. Perhaps it was that they sat in candle light. Perhaps they were both thinking of the last time they had broken bread together. The day of their wedding. Remember, this was to be the first night they were to spend as man and wife.

"Audrey noticed his wine glass was untouched. He had always liked that good Burgundy his father got from the Duke of Medford's cellars. 'Drink your wine, dear,' she said. 'You've scarcely tasted it. Isn't the temperature right?' He sipped at it. 'They don't

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allow me very much these days/ he answered. She started to tell him that his father and mother would be home over the week end when his face went all strange

as he stared at the pictures hanging behind her on the wall. ‘Look, Audrey. Look at those faces/ he whispered. She turned to look, frightened. There was nothing unusual. The pictures of Guy Fenton, Robert Fenton and Charles Zackerly, all members of the family that had died between 1740 and 1810. ‘What about them?’ she asked. ‘They’re just the same as always, John.’ She was relieved that they were, she didn’t mind telling me.

“ ‘Are you sure, Audrey? Are you sure?’ he kept saying. She got up and switched on the electric lights. It steadied him a bit. She was distressed about his torn nerves. She tried to soothe him. ‘Do you want to go to your room and rest?’

“No, he didn’t want to go to bed. He wanted Meakins to turn on all the lights in the library and bring the coffee in there. She was no different from most women. She hated brilliantly lit rooms but could imagine the long black nights John had spent in France. He surely had need of brightness and light. Poor lad. After coffee he fidgeted. Moved from chair to chair.

In rapid succession he lit a cigarette, a cigar and a pipe only to drop them after a puff or two. She could see he was trying to get up courage to tell her something vitally important and unable to find the approach. She had no clue and, seeing he was tired, suggested bed again. He gave her a quick, sharp look which puzzled her. Did he think she was an over-sexed woman, anxious for her conjugal rights? Or—and she hated

herself for thinking it—perhaps venereal disease had touched him. You know how many rumors came home of its inroads on the troops and, after all, he'd been in France over two years.

"Don't misunderstand, Chilly. She didn't expect him to be a knight in shining armor. She was modern enough not to hope for more than discretion and good taste on the part of her husband if he was away from her a long time. She spoke very freely to me. 'After all, Major Forrester,' she finished, 'we are grown-ups who have found out that the stork doesn't bring the babies, and you're John's friend and a doctor.'

"I looked at her in admiration, this brave young soul full of courage. She had a terrific problem on her hands and no one to go to with it. Her own mother had died in 1915, and the older Fentons wouldn't understand. The Victorian age had left its mark on them."

"She must have been a fine, honest girl, George. Just the mate for the boy he started out to be, I imagine. I can almost see the whole thing from your description. The sensitive, high strung man. Afraid of insanity. Afraid of transmitting it to offspring. There has been a lot of insanity in good families, but never a Fenton among them. But all insanity starts sometime, somewhere. That must have been his reasoning. With his traditional training of the sporting thing to do, it wouldn't be cricket, you know. There could be no consummation of the marriage in fact. And almost as

bad, the wretched fellow couldn't explain why. Am I right?"

"Absolutely, Chilly. An incredible situation. I was glad when our conversation was forced to end as the others came in, followed by John. His pleasure at seeing me was tinged with suspicion. I had been alone with Audrey. What had I told her? He could hardly wait to get me alone to ask. When I told him I'd been mum, worry fell away from him like an old cloak. We must have dinner there and spend the night. So much to say. How did I leave everyone in the regiment? What were they doing? Had I seen his chestnut mare? Did she clip out well? He hadn't written to anyone. The explanations were too difficult. He seemed fine.

"Quite normal except for one thing. As we went in to dinner he whispered to me, 'Watch the faces of the pictures on the wall. My ancestors try to have a game with me.' He said it lightly but the serious undertone was evident. I was glad Audrey had told me of her experience with him, so I knew there would really be no eerie manifestation from the oil painted buffers in their heavy frames. Just before the dessert he kicked my leg sharply under the table and I dropped my fork with a clatter. While attention was drawn to me, John's lips formed a silent message—'Look at the faces.'

"I turned around, pretending to be casual but wondering what I would see. There was nothing but the line of stern faces that hung as usual, peering above our heads over starched linen neckcloths and velvet coats in their habitual disapproval of our modern age.

John's eyes were eagerly waiting for me to turn back to him. I shook my head as a negative signal. He seemed terribly relieved. Long after the others had gone to bed that night, we sat in the brilliantly lit library, talking just as you and I are doing now. He told me something of what he had gone through in the hospitals. The foul baths and treatments until they found out he wasn't a contagious case."

"He must have cursed you for that, but you made it hard for busy doctors to find out what was wrong with him."

"He did curse me. Many the time. He was grateful, though. It had been a terrific effort on his part to keep them from finding out his mental condition. His nerves wore to a frazzle and that had been the real cause of his home-coming on indefinite leave. When he finished telling that, I asked why in the devil he had kicked my shins at the table. He said that his forebears were in the habit of letting their faces fade out of the canvases while that of the German Hartman replaced them, grinning at him from the walls like the famous Cheshire cat.

"It had happened first the night he arrived home, upsetting the idea that he had been able to cure himself and making a different basis for his relationship with Audrey. I wouldn't be so old-fashioned as to say that sex lifted its ugly head, because I don't think it's ugly and the originator of that phrase was a bit hazy about anatomy. Nevertheless, the problem was there. They were mad for each other in a perfectly normal way.

She was honest, modern but modest. So was he, but the fear of harming this girl thwarted his natural impulses.

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"People with no family tradition haven't those handicaps. You said, 'It wasn't the sporting thing to do.' That's just a phrase, if you don't mind my saying so, which doesn't even scratch the surface. Deep underneath is the urge for bodily perfection that is responsible for the advance of the human race. Our earliest people emulated wild beasts in destroying the aged and children who were physically or mentally feeble. That was in John's subconscious mind, I'm sure. But how to tell her?

"He had thought so often of coming home to her. Of being alone with her. The cold winter nights in the trenches, feeling the imaginary warmth of her body. The warm summer nights in the fields, seeing her face in the cool moon. Now that they were together, he was full of pain not to possess this woman, his wife, whom he wanted so badly. If he didn't love her so much it would have been easier. He didn't want to lie. He didn't dare tell the truth. His wildest hallucinations about Hartman were calm moments compared with the mental turmoil of figuring a way out of this situation, a way out, with happiness—and honor.

"He didn't know a man's brain could stand so much without bursting out of its skull. Every second the

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hands of the library clock moved on towards the hour for going to bed. The insistent ticking changed as he

listened. ‘Tick-tock, tick-tock’ became ‘Upstairs-dear, upstairs-dear,’ the same as railway car wheels have a way of doing. He told all this to me so simply. No whining or feeling sorry for himself. Just his bad luck. His very simplicity made it all the more pathetic. This kind, well-bred male, suffering from a slight neurosis which he magnified into a form of insanity.

“He told me how he had fidgeted. Lit a cigarette. A cigar. A pipe. Nothing had any taste. He was thinking every instant. Thinking of what to tell her. What to tell her. She talked pleasantly the while. Seeing his distraction she suddenly said, ‘Would you like to go to bed, dear?’ He looked at her sharply. Did she ask that in innocence, out of pity for his obvious weariness, or was the same feeling for him in her mind as he had for her? Just one more question that burned his mind like the sudden blast of a blow-torch. He crossed to where she sat on a low stool and took the knitting out of her restless hands, throwing the woolly mass on a nearby chair. Still holding her hands, he sat at her feet with his head against her knee.”

“Out in China I saw a torture called the LiChi cut.

They cut all the muscles of the body one by one. As near all two hundred-odd as they can without killing the victim. The muscles of the heart are saved for the last. Fenton must have tried to outdo them in drawing out the torture he inflicted on himself, poor lad.”

“Terrible. There’s worse to come, too. Sitting on the floor, she couldn’t see his face. He couldn’t lie to her if she was looking at him, you know. I can’t tell you

exactly what he said to her. Pretty compliments. Little endearments. Anyone looking at them would have envied these people. Laughing. Love making. She freed her hands and put her arms around his neck, holding him close. It set him on fire. To hell with ethics. To hell with fear. To hell with insanity. To hell with everything and everybody. He was healthy. He was sane. The Fentons had always been sane. She was his wife. His woman. He was going to possess her. Nothing could stop him now. It was the right thing to do. He had kept away from women in France, waiting for this moment. He trembled nervously like a young stallion scenting a mare in the paddock.

"Through the howling gale of emotion came the tiny, insistent sound of the clock ticking a new refrain. 'Take a chance—take a chance.' Why not? Who could

stop him? He remembered a drill sergeant on a barrack square asking a recruit, 'Are ye a man or a mouse?' That was the question. Man or mouse? He was a man. He'd show them. He'd show himself. He got to his feet, picking up Audrey as if she were a toy. Her arms still around his neck, he kissed her wildly and carried her upstairs to the bedroom. No wrestlers were ever keener to come to grips than these two young, eager primitives who discarded their cool, correct deportment with their clothes."

"I feel like standing up and cheering for them, George. You won't mind an old man saying that I hope his courage was rewarded. That he found her good."

“You know the story of a kingdom lost for lack of a horseshoe nail? This is more tragic. They were almost ready for bed. Audrey came over to where John was standing at his dressing table. The poor child was too modern to be coy, so she took refuge behind that flimsy camouflage of our post-Victorian age, a casual air. To conceal her eagerness, she looked at the table trying to make light conversation. Her fingers touched a small tag fastened to a shredded cord. ‘What’s this, John?’ He glanced at it carelessly, only aware of its general

outline in his preoccupation. ‘Looks like an identity disc. Is it mine?’ She held it up to the light and read slowly, ‘W. von Hartman——’

“John snatched it from her hand, trembling. Hartman! Hartman, thrusting his dead hand between him and Audrey. His nerves stood on edge like an angry cat’s fur. He threw the identity disc on the table, blindly following Audrey into bed. She saw he was disturbed and tried to soothe him but he couldn’t get Hartman out of his mind. The result was that he found himself completely impotent.”

“Impotent? Not really, George? Damn it, man, that’s terrible! I can hardly believe it. Yet I know a case where an excess of desire made a young man impotent—his emotion overcame him. My word! Impotence is the last thing any man will admit, true or false.” Chilton got up to light a cigar, between puffs asking, “What happened then? What did the poor devil do?”

“What could he do but make awkward excuses? He was so ashamed. So humiliated. To add to his trouble, Audrey, with her inexperience, thought that the difficulty was due to some deficiency, some lack on her part. She lay sobbing while John mumbled incoherent explanations.

He grabbed for words which flew by like straws in the wind. His nerves. Sudden shocks. Condition was only temporary. He was sure of that. Perhaps he’d be all right by to-morrow. If she was too unhappy, he’d release her. Let her get a divorce. He’d go to London and see his solicitor. They’d arrange grounds. Professional co-respondents.

“She wouldn’t hear of it. It was her fault. She hadn’t been sporting. He had warned her that the doctors didn’t want him to be excited and she had disregarded him. They fell asleep weeping in each others’ arms like two children. The next morning his mind was made up. He wouldn’t try again. Not till the war was over and this nightmare of fear and horror swept away. Luckily, there was some hunting. They went from county to county, riding hard all day, by night too tired to do anything but sleep. Then to London to see Thomas. Remember him, Chilly?”

“Old Charlie Thomas? He was a great neurologist. I thought he died in 1916.”

“No. 1917. A shell splinter got him in Portland Square on his way home from Guy’s. They went to him together. He reviewed the information Audrey gave him, balancing it with John’s understatement of

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the case. John told him nothing about Hartman, you understand. So Thomas sent them off happy in the hope that John would be all right in time. The wise old boy didn't stipulate how long it would take, but advised that they sleep in separate rooms. He reasoned that living quietly in the same house would effect a natural cure. John's mother came back to Fenway House and Fuzzy would go down week-ends, so they were a happy family.

"The news from France was good. The enemy had retreated behind the Hindenburg Line. John regretted not being with the 27th, one of the regiments which hastened the withdrawal. Except for occasional spells of moodiness, he felt better. He would try himself out by going into the dining room alone to look at the old portraits. Each time he tried it took a little longer before the faces would begin to change into that of Hartman. He had been able to stay ten minutes a few days before my arrival. He was going to try to stay an hour, if he could manage without interruptions from any of the household. If he could stay for an hour he'd know he was entirely well. But he had some black days. When they came he couldn't bear staying in the house.

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It tortured him to see Audrey. To hear her voice. To smell her healthy skin if she leaned over him to point out something in one of Saki's books that they were reading together. Good, healthy nonsense about Tobermory, the cat that could talk, or 'The Open

Window,' which had all the elements of being a mystery story without being one. When those days came he would take to the woods and fields, tramping until exhausted. It had been just such a day that we had chanced on for our visit. He was grateful to break through his enforced repression. To be able to speak freely without heed of the effect each word would produce.

"As he went on endlessly I thought of the first time I had seen a frozen spring. In Scotland, where we had gone to spend a boyhood Christmas, my cousin took me to see it. Like a huge, marble rose, grey and shiny. We broke the thick ice with a rock and underneath the water was running as it always had done. John was like that. It was daylight before we stopped talking. Iris had an appointment to fit some dresses in Folkstone so we said good-bye to Audrey and Mrs. Fenton before lunch. John was still asleep and I told them not to disturb him. It may sound cowardly, but I was careful to keep away from being alone with Audrey again. At

the car she whispered to me, 'Will it be all right?' and all I could do was to nod and say, 'Patience. Patience.'

"Fuzzy Fenton got in with us. He had to go to Ashford so we carried him as far as Folkstone Central Station. All the way through the Alkham Valley he chattered of John and Audrey. He slapped his hands heartily. Fine young stock. Should be good breeders. Ha-ha! His jovial, off-hand manner of referring to his family in farm terms didn't conceal his desire for an heir. He wanted the race of Fentons to go on. His

nearest relation, a cousin, had left a son. Just a little boy whose mother had taken him off to Ireland. John was the last male of the direct line. Fuzzy told us of refusing a baronetcy last Birthday Honours. The ninth Fenton who chose to remain a private citizen. Not from any disloyalty to the throne. Pride of family made them carry on the tradition of Godfrey Fenton."

"Godfrey Fenton? That's going back a long way. His name was in our school history books. Imprisoned by Henry the Eighth for some reason, wasn't he?"

"Yes. Henry liked Godfrey's pretty wife. Wanted her for his left hand, if you know what I mean. Godfrey was told that his tacit consent would be rewarded with a baronetcy. Perhaps a peerage. His reply, 'I

prefer to be called mister than have my wife called mistress,' brought him a few years in the Tower. The threat of the headsman's axe didn't change his way of thinking. Henry's successor freed him and offered the same reward without any strings to it, but Godfrey said no. No title. Every Fenton since has done likewise. A proud, honest family, Chilly."

"Damn fine, too, George. Wish we had more like them in England to-day. Go on with the young people's story. You've got me all anxious to know what follows."

"John stayed quietly at home, sitting on the terrace for hours, watching the chestnut drive. If he saw the arrival of a person he didn't know, he'd pop over the balustrade and disappear behind the trees of the park.

Once he stayed out the night, appearing before breakfast the next morning muddy and wet from having tramped in the rain. He was nervous and irritable from fatigue but while he was bathing a telegram came from the lord chamberlain commanding him to appear in London at Buckingham Palace to receive the Military Cross at the hands of His Majesty the King."

"That must have bucked him up, didn't it?"

"No end. Made a new man of him. While an announcement

of the award had appeared some time before in the London *Gazette*, it wasn't quite the same thing. The printed lines in the newspaper were just a confirmation of a letter from the regiment. Colonel Long had written him that he had been awarded the Military Cross . for conspicuous bravery in bringing to safety his working party after repulsing an enemy raid and obtaining valuable information.' It was gratifying, but not as exciting as the telegraph form which was practically a direct communication from the King."

"It must have stirred him, George. I remember when my first one came. Made me feel as if I was drunk on the finest champagne. After all, there is something in everyone that responds to meeting a ruler. King. President. Dictator. Pope. Headmaster. Native chief. There is an inherent greatness stamped on a ruler. When I say inherent I mean it. George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, Mr. Mussolini, Mr.

Lenin, Mr. Stalin were born as great as any Bourbon, Hapsburg, Hohenzollern or Romanoff."

"I know what you mean, Chilly. When I was received by the King, at my investiture, he was so kind that I felt I was talking to my father. At the same time I knew I was talking to my King, the head of the

British Empire, and perhaps the ablest ruler any country has had for generations."

"And probably the least ballyhooed, too."

"Right. You've evidently heard of what happened in the Labor crisis not long ago. But let's not talk politics. To get back to John, he had the servants cleaning every bit of his kit, as if he was going to take it all up to the palace for inspection. Every spot of leather well boned and polished. Every brass button and buckle dazzled the eye. You know the 27th were always great on spit and polish."

" 'The Shineys,' we called them in India."

"John did them proud. Impeccably turned out on the great day. Peach colored cavalry drill breeches and barathea tunic all very smart and new. The youngsters of the 27th were partial to peach colored breeches. His sword with the leather knot properly tied. The gloved left hand holding the right glove. The cap at the proper angle with its silver badge, twenty-seven in Roman numerals surrounded by a laurel wreath, blazing like a comet. Sounds a bit silly now, but it was all very important to us then.

"Fuzzy met John and the two women at the station in London, resplendent in his staff car, and convoyed

them to the Palace. The family fussed over John, then he passed into the hands of a chamberlain for final instructions in court etiquette. He wrote to me later that he felt like a prize dog being got ready for a kennel show, as they looked him over. The chamberlain lifted a vexed eyebrow at the peach colored breeches. He was about to remark his disapproval of them, when he saw the badges of the 27th. He shrugged his shoulders and went on. After all, the 27th was the 27th, and had its privileges in the matter of dress.

"John was told how many paces to go, left turn, step forward two paces. Halt. Salute. Listen to His Majesty. Answer his questions briefly. Don't ask him any. Answer, 'Yes, Your Majesty,' the first time. 'Yes, sir—No, sir,' after that. 'Thank you, sir,' after the King pins the decoration on your tunic. Shake hands with the King. Don't grip his hand too firmly. He has to shake many hands in the course of a day. After the handshake, salute again. Step back two paces. Right turn. Quick march. Rejoin your family or friends.

"John stood in the anteroom with the other officers commanded to the investiture, taking in the details of the room. A great formal room for formal occasions. The furniture. The paintings. All austere and dignified.

So many things new to him that he was entirely absorbed. Felt completely normal in his excitement. His turn came. They called his name and he went. The faces were blurred to John. All he could see was the

bearded man in the service uniform of a field marshal, standing in front of a small group of people. Two or three women, no doubt the Queen and Princess Mary. Perhaps Princess Patricia, standing there with the Duke of Connaught, he thought. He tried to remember his instructions from the court chamberlain. Halt. Left turn. Two paces forward. Someone repeated his name out loud. 'Captain John Fenton.' John blushed furiously. He felt that all London stopped to listen to his name and to look at him. It suddenly occurred to him that the King was pinning the silver cross with its white and purple ribbon right over his heart, saying in a clear low voice, 'It gives me great pleasure to decorate you with the Military Cross.'

"John said, 'Thank you, Your Majesty.' He waited for the royal handshake. There was a twinkle in the King's eyes, lighting up the face that smiled so seriously. He knew that John was terribly nervous and terribly proud, so he said, 'You are F. Z. Fenton's son, aren't you?' 'Yes, sir.' 'And Powys Fenton was your uncle?' 'Yes, sir.'

" 'He was in the training ship with me. Too bad he died so young. I'm glad to see the race of Fentons go on. They have done a lot for England. I'm afraid there is still more to do. Good luck.'

"John choked up so that he could scarcely manage to say, 'Thank you, sir.' Somehow or other he got through the handshake, salute and right turn. On his way someone thrust a small black leather case into his hand. When he rejoined the family he opened the case

with an expectant air. I don't know what he thought might be inside, but it was only the box to hold the decoration. The family were thrilled beyond words at being mentioned by the King, you may be sure."

"I tell you, George, those little things have held the nation together. It's all right for socialists to sneer at kings. Send one to the palace and have the King or Queen inquire into the health of his dear Aunt Fanny, and his point of view changes. When they find out that a king is a human being, a father, a son, a husband, with better manners and infinitely more tact than most people, and not a military Juggernaut, they can appreciate the cares and worries that weigh down royal shoulders."

"You are in good form to-night. You really should go in for politics. I can see the hoardings—'Major

General Chilton advocates loyalty to the throne . . and all that sort of thing. Bravo, Chilly!"

"Don't act the goat, George. You feel just the way I do about the King and the royal family. You were half choked up yourself when you spoke of John's emotions at being decorated. Unsentimental English. Bah! Noel Coward stripped the hide off us with *Cavalcade*. I suppose the trip to the palace upset the lad?"

"Well, I didn't hear very much for some months after that. John dropped me an occasional note, the only reference to himself being in the postscript. 'Holding my own.' His nervous handwriting belied the improvement his laconic statement implied. About that

time you left us to go to Italy with part of the Fifth Army. Major Lovell went to the air force shortly after, leaving command of the Ambulance to me. It kept me jumping. We covered so much territory. Traveling at night so that the enemy airplanes wouldn't spot the five divisions of cavalry on the move. We went up to Belgium and caught a bombing at Pope-ringhe. South toward Montreuil-sur-Mer. West to Caulaincourt, the jumping-off place for the Cambrai show. Then the push back when we were caught napping at Gauzicourt. Lots of casualties. Then we

settled down for the winter. The cavalry went into the trenches again in front of Vermand. Same place as the previous spring. The horses were back near Athies, where I stayed with the Ambulance.

"A thick letter came from Iris. Audrey had wired her in great distress to come down to Fenway House. John had disappeared while she had gone with his mother to a soldiers' bazaar in Canterbury. They had thought he was off on one of his periodical tramps. When bedtime came there was no sign of him. Next morning they got through on the telephone to Fuzzy at the War Office. He started an inquiry going. In a few hours he found that John had been passed as fit by a medical board in Ashford and had gone back to France to rejoin his regiment. While this information was being run to the ground, a letter had come to the disconsolate women. A few simple words, Iris said. Audrey gave her the letter to read:

“ ‘My dear—I’m going back to France today. I must finish what I started. Tell father and mother that I can never thank them for their kindness. And you, my darling—without your understanding, life would have been impossible. I couldn’t bear parting from you so I leave this way. I love you, Audrey.

John.’ ”

Chapter Six

"THAT WAS ALL. Why hadn't he told her?

"She asked herself that question over and over. In her own room, she threw herself on her bed to read the letter again. She couldn't see a word of it through her wet eyes, poor girl. Can't you see her lying there, lashed by thoughts which beat down like a hailstorm on an uncut grain field? The old doubts came back to her again. Was she at fault? In spite of what Doctor Thomas said, was something lacking in her? What could she have done to stimulate her husband? She loved him. He loved her. It hadn't been enough. For so many months he had been in the same house with her. Only a few hours before he had been in the next room. All she had to do was to walk across and open the door to see him. To put her arms around him and hold him close, all the tobacco scented man-smells in her nostrils. Now he was gone. Gone to France where Death sat at the crossroads. And she had nothing left of him but empty memories. Her sense of frustration was overwhelming. Complete.

"In the blackness of her mind she suddenly knew why. She wanted a child! Now she knew the atavistic feeling for life, new life, to be stirring inside her. Tiny gums sucking at breasts streaming with warm sweet milk. 'A child, a child,' she cried again and again. She wanted John's child. One that would be like him. To carry on for him. What had been a lack before was

now a loss. A grievous, bewildering loss. Suppose John should be killed. Then she would never be able to have his child. The thought of it made her body shiver with fear and pain. She felt she was being cruelly punished for her unkind thoughts when John's condition had annoyed her. If she could only undo the past. She wanted a child, a living token of her husband. Not a portrait in oils. Not a battle flag. Not a sword. Flesh and blood, her flesh and blood. His flesh and blood.

"She was still weeping when Iris got there. Iris sat and wept with her as she gave her comfort and sympathy. When Audrey quieted down, Iris went to sit with Mrs. Fenton. That dear soul was quite disturbed at John's sudden departure. At the same time, proud that he didn't shirk his duty in an age of slackers. 'Just like his father,' she said. 'His father would be in the

trenches now if the War Office would let him?"

"He would have been, too, but after Kitchener's death a lot of the older ones were shelved for younger men. You know what they tried to do to me, George."

"Exactly. Well, the old lady went on at a great rate about her husband, her son and her daughter-in-law. She loved Audrey dearly. She hoped that—she stopped to search for the proper words—she hoped that there was a possibility of tiny feet pattering in the hallways soon. That a stork would flap its wings over Fenway Hall. You know all the old cliches of the era when Victoria was Queen and Albert was her prophet. Mrs. Fenton's scheme of life was based on a woman's duty

in the matter of bearing a family even if she couldn't bring herself to speak openly of pregnancy and childbirth. It was rather pathetic, Iris thought, as the older woman asked her if she believed in all the modern folderol of twin beds, separate sleeping rooms and steam heat. I never quite got the connection between these things but the old dear must have felt that the combination made for less children. The letter closed with messages from them all and the strict order to keep my eye on John when he turned up.

"One night about a week later I was having a drink

in my Nissen hut with Paton and Grainger. It was a pitch black night outside, like the night Tim Whelen got tight and slept on the ground outside his own hut because he couldn't see the door. My servant, Barter, was pulling the cork out of a fresh bottle when we heard a crash outside followed by a lot of good swearing. Some one cursing the Medical Corps and its wagon parks. One of our drivers had left a G. S. wagon standing across a bypath. John, coming over to visit me on a borrowed bicycle, had collided with it in the dark. He had rejoined the 27th that day. Looked much better. Bit of flesh on him. No strain around the eyes. I gave him a drink— Oh, beg pardon, old man. I hadn't noticed our bottle was empty. I'll get a fresh one out of the sideboard. Where's the cork-screw?"

"Here it is. Give me the bottle. Did Fenton seem normal?" Chilton asked, pulling the cork.

"Quite. If I ever saw a normal man he was one. We couldn't talk freely until the other chaps left but he

seemed to be in good spirits. Told us all the new stories he had picked up in England and at the Base Depot. The same jolly old John we all loved, I thought. When the others had gone there was an awkward

moment. Each waiting for the other to speak first. My curiosity got the better of me.

“ ‘Are. you all right?’

“ ‘Not really, but I’m going to be,’ he answered, smiling bravely.

“‘Good lad. When?’ I knew he wouldn’t mind me asking.

“ ‘When this is over. I’ve beaten it now. The old fear, you know.’

“ ‘And the other?’ He knew what I meant.

“He sipped his drink slowly before answering. ‘I don’t know about that for certain. I didn’t want to take any chances. It wouldn’t be very sporting, would it? How does it feel to be a colonel?’

“He wanted to change the subject. In a few words he had told me all there was to tell. ‘How does it feel to be a colonel?’ he repeated with a mischievous grin. Iris had written them about my promotion.

“ ‘How does it feel to run away from your family, John?’

“He gave a surprised laugh. ‘You know that, do you? It was the only way, George. I’d done enough to Audrey without inflicting a parting scene on her. She understands, I think. So does mother. Father will be

a bit disappointed at no heir for the moment. That will have to wait until this war is cleaned up.'

"He was glad to get back with his regiment. After all, his whole life's training had been directed to making a soldier of him. Eton and Sandhurst. Aggressive sports like football and hunting. Shoulder to shoulder, stirrup to stirrup with other boys like himself."

"Funny, George, how England turns them out on the same pattern and yet gets fine individuals, whether they go in the Army, Navy or the Church."

"Amazing, isn't it? John was full of plans for his squadron. He was second in command now, under Boyne. His idea was to start courses for the privates to fit the non-professional soldiers for vocations after the war. We came to that after the Armistice but it was an advanced idea for the winter of 1917 with no peace in sight. He wanted to borrow a car and driver from the Motor Transport two evenings a week for those who wanted to become chauffeurs or motor mechanics. He thought a sergeant-major from the Royal Engineers might be put at his disposal daily for an hour after stables to teach building and construction to any fancying those trades. He counted on getting the Catholic padre from the divisional staff, who was a Jesuit and a damn clever

teacher, to give lectures on history and literature for the lads who wanted to improve their minds. His regimental signalling officer would give instruction in the elements of telegraphy and wireless. There were

many more subjects. All practical, you'll agree, and well thought out.

"He had even expected me to talk on anatomy and the prevention of venereal disease, as if they didn't get enough preaching about the latter from their own M. O. I told him that, but he said it would be more impressive coming from a colonel than from a captain. I'm not sure that my leg wasn't being pulled, but I agreed. He was so eager. So honest. I think I told you before that the boy was an idealist. He made one request before leaving. Would I write to Audrey telling her there was no cause for worry?

"I saw him several times in the next few weeks. They kept him back with the horses, while Boyne went into the front line. All the cavalry regiments were short-handed with officers and men away on leave or attending instructional courses and three quarters of the remainder holding the line. That left a scanty few to keep five hundred-odd horses per regiment in condition for the possible spring offensive. John was a good man

with horses. He had a big job on his hands. Looking after the hay burners of his own squadron as well as keeping a protective eye on C Squadron. He never had so much riding in his life. From dawn to sunrise half of those horses had to be exercised. The other half went out between sunset and dark, so that they wouldn't be spotted from the air. The rest of the day was spent in grooming. The men were singing:

“ ‘Grooming—grooming—grooming,
Always bloody well grooming
From Reveille to Lights Out,
Grooming all the day,’ ”

to the tune of the hymn, ‘Holy, holy, holy, all Thy saints adore Thee.’ There was all the saddlery to be cleaned and dubbed. The horses of the 27th had been picketed on lines in the woods near Nuellet, but the German aviators got into the habit of dumping all their spare bombs there, on the way home for afternoon coffee. The horses had to be moved. It rained every day. The horses got cracked heels and mud fever. The men got piles and influenza. They all wanted a chance to go up into the front line. Rather face bullets than feed-bags.”

“Strange psychology, that. I’ve seen them face danger gladly through sheer ennui. In the Navy they volunteer for the submarines and destroyers out of boredom with battleship routine.”

“Queer, isn’t it? Even John, for all his love of them, was glad to get away from the horses when his turn came to go up the line. Drury came down to replace him, I think. I went up about a week later with Colonel Long. While he inspected the regimental frontage, I stayed with John. They were in fairly comfortable dugouts. The only fault was the entrances. Faced the wrong way. Built by the Germans in ’16, you see.

“It was quiet in the sector. From the north came the rumble of big guns. From the south the sharp bark of the French seventy-fives blended with the softer report of the occasional shells from our own field batteries. A big No Man’s Land, about three thousand yards wide in front of them. Full of gullies and clumps of trees. One could lose a regiment out there in the dark. An Indian regiment had a squadron missing for two days before they could find them. Patrols kept going all night. Only the look-outs were on duty daytimes. I had lunch with Boyne and John. I remember the port they gave me after. Found it in some chateau

cellar. I’ve never tasted any as good before or since.”

“H-m-ph! I never tasted good port in France. Too thin. No body. We get the best shipped to England. Any English tart in Leicester Square would turn her nose up at what the French call port wine.”

“You ought to know, old man. You’ve sampled plenty of both. We finished a couple of bottles. The colonel was ready to start back. I was able to ask Boyne how John was getting on.

“ ‘Fine. Fine,’ he answered warmly. ‘A keen officer. He’s all over that deathless Hun business. I think. I’ll keep an eye on him for you.’

“John was outside the dugout talking to the colonel when I joined them. They were discussing the possibility of an attack from the enemy on a big scale. Troops were being massed on the other side, all drawn from the Russian and Austrian fronts, while we were weakened by contributions to the Italian campaign.”

“I was one of the contributions. Damn it, man, I nearly froze to death in those Italian mountains. Our fellows sat in holes blasted out of the rock.”

“Our chaps who stayed in France weren’t so much better off. They had a string of poorly connected shell holes and the dugouts I spoke of which faced the wrong

way. You see, when the Germans retreated the French had to make their trenches according to the lay of the land. The Germans knew that. Let the French dig in, put up wire and settle down. Then one night the German trench mortar barrage came down without warning. Blew the French lines to bits in ten minutes, all according to plan.”

“No fools, those Germans. Wonder they didn’t win the war!”

“Isn’t it? How they must have chuckled to see the Frenchmen entrenching on a line they had the range of to an inch. The French had to retire to the old German trenches behind them. Must have been too discouraged to improve the positions. That’s the way we took them over with our handfuls of dismounted troops. We had about six men to every hundred yards, in holes packed full of cartridges, bombs and bully beef, protected by some strands of loose wire. In case of attack against us, the orders were to hold the line to the last man. No supports. No reserves. No re-enforcements. That was the spot where the Sherwood Foresters were scuppered the following March. About a week later the 27th were

shifted further north to relieve the Manchester Regiment which was going into Belgium. John

was acting as adjutant. Kept him busy. Into the new trenches he had to go around with the adjutant of the Manchester to take over. That done, he went into the dugout to make up his report.

“Four officers were playing a hand of bridge. Clarke, Leeson, Boyne and some stranger. Grubby cards in hand, they sat at a table made of an old ammunition box, lit by a single candle stuck in an empty bottle.

“John took a bit of candle out of his haversack. Sitting on his bunk, he worked on the report. By degrees the sharp voice of the stranger speaking in precise English grated on his ears like a worn gramophone needle. Without stopping his writing John was unconsciously trying to place the accent. Was it Scotch? Irish? Yorkshire? Perhaps Welsh, the way the fellow said, ‘So?’ with a rising inflection after everyone else’s remarks. John told me later that the man seemed to be asking endless questions. How long do you expect to stay in the line? Did you have a bad time in your last spot? Are you up to strength? And so on. Harmless enough questions for an officer of a withdrawing regiment to ask of the relief.”

“I suppose so. Some of the junior officers were damn nuisances with their eternal questions. The Guards

have the right idea. Senior officers never speak to juniors except to give orders, until the junior has been in the regiment for a year, so the young ones learn to keep their mouths shut."

"I don't agree with you, Chilly. That system wouldn't work in a lot of cases."

"Nonsense, George. Makes for all-round discipline. Good manners, too. Cuts out needless chin-wagging. Keeps the young squirts in their proper places."

"Your age makes you feel that way. Age and gout. The old bear slapping down the playful cubs, eh? Anyhow, the fellow chattered away, at the same time playing good bridge. Clarke was dealing the cards. Boyne was wanted outside. He asked John to take his hand for a few minutes. As John gathered up the cards, Clarke introduced him to the stranger who sat in the darkest corner, away from the candle light.

" 'Captain Fenton,—Mr.—er—.' The stranger filled in, 'Harper.' Clarke thanked him and continued. 'Mr. Harper of the Manchesters, John. Their C. O. sent him back to give us information about the Jerry's trench mortars. They have a new one. Smaller shell, but longer range. More powerful explosive.'

"Leeson broke in. He fancied himself the regimental

wit, you know. 'I hear this one can kill your mother-in-law, your tailor and yourself all in one shot. Am I right, Mr. Harper?' In the feeble laugh that followed John looked sharply at Mr. Harper who sat with his head down, studying his cards. Even in the dim light

something about the man seemed familiar. Harper and the others had their caps on so John could only see part of his face. The man's nose stood out sharply from the cheek-bones. That was it. John had seen that nose somewhere before. But where? Why did it puzzle him? Everyone in the British Army had a nose. A more or less good nose, he thought of this one, amused inwardly at the attention he was giving to a feature that was part of the regular equipment, so to speak. A servant brought in a bottle of whiskey and some tin cups. To put them on the table, he had to move the candle to the other side. The light fell directly on Harper's face, making the polished badges and buttons on his uniform and cap throw back reflected sparks of light as he picked up the candle with a casual air and placed it on the other side of the table again. In that instant, John had seen enough. His heart seemed to stop beating. He couldn't breathe. The blood rushed to his head and stayed there.

"Was the old fear, the old delusion, the old mania coming back again? Surely he was mistaken. It couldn't be possible. It couldn't be, he told himself. Yet he was certain that the man sitting opposite, in a British uniform and wearing the badges of the Manchesters, had the face of Hartman! Hartman! The German he had killed twice before. John rubbed his eyes, expecting the face to change. It didn't. The man sat there, calm as you please. Sorted his cards. Puffed at a cigarette. Sipped his drink from the tin can at his elbow, seemingly unaware of John's scrutiny.

Hartman's face on an Englishman. Too ridiculous! Yet John's ancestors were Englishmen and they had taken on Hartman's face. John felt as if a wheel dripping with blood was running around in his head, making a noise that sounded like 'Hartman—Hartman' with every revolution, as the drops pattered on the floor of his brain. He wanted to kill the man and wipe out the face.

"The others were bidding their hands by now. John was so befogged that he could only say, 'Pass.' He called the servant to bring over the other candle from his bunk. When it came, John deliberately stuck it down in front of Harper. Harper, apparently by accident,

hit it with his elbow and the candle snuffed out as it struck the floor. In looking for it after his apology, Mr. Harper stepped on it, also by accident, crushing the usefulness out of it.

"So the play started. The bid was two no trumps, I think. John told me all these minute details later, digging them out from some photographic spot in his brain. As Harper led out his spades he said, 'I'm glad to be getting out of the line for awhile. Almost due for leave. If the Germans push us, do you think we can hold them?'

"Clarke answered, 'Not with the losses we've had and the new recruits that are coming out. Conscripts and conscientious objectors. They're awful.' Leeson said that the Tommies in the Browns had a mass-

meeting when they were relieved the month before. They wanted to quit the way the Russians did.'

"Harper turned to John. 'Put a small club on my ace, will you, captain? How are things in England?' He made a direct question of it. John tried to pull himself together. This couldn't be any ghost. It was a flesh and blood man. An Englishman, for all his resemblance to Hartman. That was something, anyway. He could deal with a human being. This Harper

person had a certain easy charm. Undoubtedly well-bred. Self assured. Damn good-looking, too. An air that comes from generations of security, wealth and culture. John couldn't place the name or family. The fellow's hands were kept moving constantly like a man trying to hide the fact that a finger or two was missing.

"John thought of all these things before he answered the question, 'How are things in England?'

" 'England? Oh, they're either crowing or growling. Lots of optimistic old blighters safely past military age making good profits from war industries. One of them came to see us at home. Sir Hubert Packenham. Fat pink cheeks and little pig eyes. Spouting about the brave boys doing their bit. Everyone carrying on at home. Business as usual. Conscript everybody. You know the kind. Takes packages of cigarettes and books on adventure to the poor chaps crippled in hospitals. And there are the conscientious objectors. Willing to take cushy jobs if the pay is big enough.

" 'After the war is over they'll be looking for cushier jobs and ready enough to kiss the royal hand

that gives them knighthoods, or the less than royal bottoms that give them profits. And the cowards who plan to move

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Parliament and the crown jewels to Canada before the Kaiser moves into Buckingham Palace. It's disgusting.'

"Clarke broke in. 'I say, that's all rot. Fancy the Kaiser in Buckingham Palace!' Harper stopped playing to say, 'Why not? Such things have happened. Napoleon was quite comfortable in foreign capitals—5 John interrupted. 'Didn't he complain that the Russians overheated Moscow?'

"Everyone laughed except Mr. Harper. A hard expression was on his face as he answered with a trace of anger in his voice, 'The Kaiser isn't as stupid as that conceited Frenchman!'

"Leeson turned the subject with some bad joke about the infallibility of fifty thousand Frenchmen but the arrogance of Harper had aroused John's suspicions. He watched closely. Harper made three no trumps. Game and rubber. As his right hand went out to gather up the cards John saw there was a large signet ring on the little finger. Harper picked up a pencil to mark down the score and John saw the crest on the ring. The head of a unicorn arising from a coronet! There it was. The very same as two Hartmans had worn. He hadn't been wrong. This was Hartman! The same man again

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and again. If he was Hartman, what was he doing in their trenches? How to make sure?

“He seized the tin cup of whiskey from the table and flung the contents full in Harper’s face. Harper, taken off his guard, jumped up shouting, ‘Du verdammte Hundt!’ before he could recover from his surprise. John grabbed for his revolver which was lying on the bunk. Harper tried to get out the door. There was a free-for-all. John trying to sight his revolver, at the same time yelling, ‘Catch him, catch him! He’s a Hun!’

“Leeson, Clarke and the servant managed to block the doorway, hanging on to Harper so that he couldn’t draw his revolver, at the same time preventing John from shooting. The noise brought Major Boyne in on the run. He took Harper’s revolver and told Leeson and Clarke to keep hold of him. John was hysterical by now, going on at a great rate. ‘He’s come back again! Kill him, one of you! I’ve done it twice before but he keeps coming back. You’ve got to kill him! Kill him dead! I’ll do it if you’ll stand clear. I’ll make him stay dead. The third time! The last time!’

“Major Boyne took John’s revolver and ordered him

into the adjoining dugout. The servant was sent in to look after him. They could hear John raving on as Boyne questioned Harper. ‘Who are you? What is your real name?’ ‘Harper, sir. William Harper. 2/14th Manchester Regiment.’ The man had regained his easy manner. Looked Boyne square in the eye as the Major asked the name of his commanding officer. Answered promptly, ‘Colonel J. G. Fisher, sir.’

"That was all that Boyne was waiting for. 'Your memory is good, young man, but the German Intelligence doesn't know everything. Colonel Fisher was killed just outside this dugout last night. Clarke, get a couple of men and take this gentleman to Brigade Headquarters. You might keep him outside until I write a report. Sorry, Mr. Harper, or whatever your name is. I could shoot you off-hand but you can take your chances with a court-martial. Rules of war, you know. Damn sporting of you to try it.'

"The fellow knew the game was up. Never flicked an eyelash. Just saluted and went out. Out to spy on death.

"Boyne sat down to write his report '. . . spy, captured through the clever work of Captain John Fenton, M. C., 27th Dragoons…' He had got that far

when John came in. 'Where is he? Don't let him get away. I killed him twice. You know that. He'll come back, Davey!' Boyne smiled at him. 'Come now, John. It's all right. He's a brave devil but his number is up this time. Sit down. Have a drink while I finish this.'

"Boyne started writing. John kept talking, with an occasional, 'Steady, lad, steady,' from Boyne until the report was finished. The major got up to leave. John grabbed him by the arm. 'Tell me, Davey—you were with me before. It's the same one. The same face. The same ring, isn't it? You saw them before. For God's sake tell me I'm not going mad! You saw them.'

" 'Of course I did. You're all right.' Boyne spoke soothingly. 'You've had a bit of nerve strain, that's all.

You shouldn’t have come back to France so soon.’

“ ‘Nonsense. Don’t try to put me off. It was the same man. I know it. I’ve been seeing his face since 1914. Seen it in mirrors. In family portraits. In the faces of dinner guests. I nearly went insane. I couldn’t tell my wife. My mother. My father. They were all so kind to me. Humored me as if I were a delicate

child. How could I ever make them understand? I could only tell it all to George. George Forrester and you. You’ve seen it all happen, Davey—.’

“The voice of Colonel Long called from outside for Boyne. The major took his report and left. John was alone, except for the forgotten servant who kept a watchful eye on him through a hole in the blanket serving as a door to the adjoining dugout. John drank the whiskey Boyne had poured for him, then crossed to where a piece of broken mirror had been fixed head high on the wall. He stood there, searching his own eyes reflected in the glass. The servant didn’t find it queer the way he spoke to himself. Thought it was an affectation of the gentry. Before the war he had been chauffeur-gardener to a man in Leicester who always talked to himself after the third bottle of port. The flickering candle threw strange shadows on John’s face as he stood, haranguing his own reflection. ‘You killed him, John Fenton. I tell you, you killed him. Killed him fairly and squarely. It was war. Not football. Him or me. It must be the same man. Davey can swear it is. Oh, Hartman. Why—’

“A loud explosion outside drowned the rest of his speech. Presently Colonel Long and two first-aid men

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came in, carrying the body of Major Boyne. John tried to help. ‘What’s wrong? Is he badly hurt?’ The colonel blinked a tear out of his eyes before he could answer. ‘I’m afraid he’s done for, poor Davey. Did it saving my life.’ John was bewildered. ‘I don’t understand, sir. He left me just a minute ago.’ Pulling back the blanket, John knelt down to listen. The heart was still pumping. Feebly. The medical corporal warned John not to shake the body. ‘Tourniquets,’ he whispered. ‘Six tourniquets to keep him from bleeding to death.’ The little man had a sort of lower class morbid pride in the number. He repeated it again as he shot morphine into a limp arm.

“Colonel Long was able to talk, to tell what happened. The captured spy had managed to work his hands free enough of the rope to get hold of a Mills bomb while Boyne was making out the report. As Clarke was leading him away, he threw it just as he went around a traverse. It landed at the colonel’s feet. Boyne caught it. Tried to throw it away, but it exploded, blowing off Boyne’s both hands and part of a foot. The colonel rattled on nervously, trying to drown all thoughts in the sound of his own voice. ‘His wife will get the Victoria Cross I’ll recommend for him—’

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John broke in, laughing hysterically. ‘Victoria Cross? What good is that? A Victoria Cross for his wife and a

wooden cross for Davey. He wouldn't let me kill Hartman. Now he's done for and Hartman is still alive. Let me have my revolver back. I'll get him! I'll finish him for good!' "

Chapter Seven

"JOHN LAUGHED all the while. A wild, high laugh that made the servant's flesh creep. Colonel Long realized John's bad state. He spoke to him sharply. Ordered him to get stretcher bearers and take Boyne back to the Field Ambulance as fast as possible. The automatic response of his muscles to a command brought John back to earth. It was a job that took all his concentration. No easy matter, you know, to get a stretcher through trenches and then across rough ground. The first vehicle that came along was a limber wagon going back for more ammunition. You know how uncomfortable they are. Each half a small box on two wheels with more or less rigid connecting shafts held by an iron pin."

"I know, George. I had to ride on a limber once. Never again. The damn things shake and jump all over the place. The drivers don't mind because they ride on the horses and don't get the bumps. You're not going to tell me that they took Boyne on a limber?"

"That's just what they did. No sign of anything

else to ride on. They knew he wouldn't last long unless he got immediate expert care. John got on the rear half of the limber and the stretcher bearers put the blanketed body in his arms. They sat on the front half, holding the ends of a rope they had slung under John's armpits to steady him. The limber went as fast as the roads would permit, galloping when there were no shell holes."

"What a ride that must have been! Night. Pitch black. Bad roads. Best friend dying in one's arms. Terrible.

Enough to upset anyone's mind."

"As a matter of fact, it was the very best thing for John at the time. The intense concentration and acute physical discomfort kept him from thinking about Hartman or anything else but the business in hand. Imagine him leaning against the rope. Heels braced against the slippery footpieces. Arms filled with the blanketed bundle of mutilated human flesh. Flesh that an hour before had been six feet of fine upstanding man. Active. Gay. One of the best. The tourniquets were holding but the blood from other wounds soaked through the blanket. The mud of the sloppy road flew off the wide iron tires, showering muck like sparks from a Catherine wheel.

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“A filthy mess when they reached us. John carried the body into the hut we used for an operating room. I stopped behind for an instant to read the note the little

corporal had passed to me. Passed it with a secretive air. Made mysterious gestures with his head towards John. It was a hurried scrawl from Colonel Long. ‘Dear Forrester —Fenton has gone off his head again. Suggest you send him to Divisional Headquarters under escort so he will be available to testify at courtmartial of spy he captured. Hope you can do something for poor old Boyne. We are going to miss him.’

“So John was back on the business of Hartman again! He seemed quite normal as he carried Boyne inside. I hadn’t looked at him closely. He was so dirty that I only knew who it was when he spoke to me. I couldn’t give that matter much thought. Boyne needed attention. He was still unconscious. Shock. Loss of blood. Morphia. His heart was making a brave struggle. How he ever withstood the trip is beyond all comprehension. John stood over him like a savage bitch wolf guarding her young. ‘You’ve got to do something for him, George. You must, if only to give him a merciful end. If he comes to, don’t let him know his hands and foot are gone. That is your part of it, George.

Mine is to get Hartman and finish him before he does any more harm. He killed Davey.’ ”

“You must have been certain Fenton was insane. Shows how one can misjudge a person. I suppose Long and the servant filled in the rest for you?”

“Yes. Along with John’s account and the few words Boyne could say, I got the story practically as I’ve told it to you. I got rid of John. Ordered him to bed. Told Captain Gannon to give him a sleeping draft and to stay with him until it worked. I didn’t want a madman, even if he was a dear friend, to come rushing into the

operating room while I was using the knife. It was an awful job. The tourniquets that our little corporal put on did honor to his training, holding the arteries tightly closed. The blood pressure had gone down considerably from the various hemorrhages. Petrie and Hobbs who were helping me suggested using the guillotine but I decided to trim by hand."

"Quite right, George. They used the guillotine too often in the war. If the patient lived he had to go through the amputations all over again to make a pocket. Extreme haste to prevent gangrene was the only excuse for using the guillotine."

"Exactly. I had no one else waiting for me. We

had evacuated all our cases to the casualty clearing station that afternoon. I must have spent two or three hours trimming the stumps, stitching other cuts and wounds and setting the right femur which had been fractured. The job was all the harder for being done on a friend. Someone I knew so well. It's easier to cut a stranger. I went to bed exhausted. Next morning I was awakened by the field telephone next to my bed. Divisional H. Q. wanted Captain Fenton at once. I put on my rain-coat over my pyjamas, got into rubber boots and went to look for John. His bed was empty. I had a vision of him scouring the rain-whipped country, revolver in hand, hunting for a possible Hartman.

"Looking into the hut where we had placed Boyne, I found John half dressed, sitting next to the cot. Talking, talking. Softly, like a mother to a sick child. I listened for a minute as John babbled on about regimental happenings. About Hartman. About Boyne's wife and

little boy. About Hartman. About the Victoria Cross that Boyne would get. About Hartman.

"I thought John was talking to himself until I saw Boyne's eyes open. He was trying to nod his accordance with what John was saying. What a constitution! I had left word to be called at any sign of his passing

out. It seemed out of the question he would live the night and here he was trying to carry on a conversation. A superman, really.

"When he saw me his eyes smiled through the pain that was heavy in them. 'Hello, Forrester,' he managed to whisper. The eyes and the voice more than repaid me for all the hours in my life I had labored as a surgeon. To him, my collar badges with the rod of Æsculapius on them were like the auspicious laurel wreaths to a Roman. I gave him a little something to quiet the pain. Told him not to talk. Tried to get John to leave. Boyne wouldn't have it. 'Let me talk,' he said quietly. New strength came into his voice as the opiate eased him. He tried to catch my eye. The only way I could avoid that was to concentrate on the cleaning of the needle and syringe.

"'Am I all right? I mean, will I be all right?' I tell you, Chilly, I never want to go through such an ordeal again. The rain drummed on the tin roof, a doleful accompaniment. I nodded in answer to his question. John leaped in. 'Of course you'll be all right, Davey. No doubt of it. Just be patient, old man. Patient and quiet. George will pull you through. Good old George. When the regiment goes to India

after the war we'll have a great time together, Davey. Big game shooting. Up the Chogo Lungmia Glacier in Baltistan for ibex. Tiger and bison in the Ghats. Pig sticking. We'll go in for the Kadir Cup, man. Polo to your heart's content.' John was a noble liar!

"Boyne's head nodded gently, for all his drawn face reminding me of the porcelain mandarin that stood on the mantel of our nursery when I was a child. For a great treat my Nannie would let me touch its head to make it waggle. The little figure had the same puzzled expression that I saw on Boyne's face. Something was bothering him. Something he couldn't put into words. John didn't sense it. I hoped he'd keep on talking to postpone the coming of the inevitable question.

" 'Tell George about Hartman, Davey. No; I'm sorry, old man. Don't talk. Just nod if I'm right or wrong. Didn't Hartman come into the dugout last night? Didn't he wear a British uniform?' John went on with his questions, only stopping for breath between them as Boyne's head kept nodding. The questions told me so much of what had happened. Suddenly it occurred to me that Boyne wasn't listening. That he didn't know a word of what John was saying. Despite the nodding of his head he was concentrating on what

was uppermost in his own mind. Watching Boyne, I lost track of what John was talking about. Boyne was trying to frame a question of his own. I saw his soundless lips slowly form the words, 'Hands' and 'Feet.' Hands and feet. He seemed to be gathering his strength. With a queer fascination I listened to the oddest duet I ever heard. John and Boyne, talking at the same time.

“ ‘My hands and feet. Are they all right? My hands? My feet?’

“ ‘Nothing to worry about. Nothing. When Hartman was taken out of the dugout, didn’t he admit his name wasn’t Harper? Didn’t he? I want George to know.’

“‘My hands. My feet. Forrester! Tell me about them. I can’t feel them!’

“ ‘Tell George what he said about the Kaiser. How he swore at me in German. Didn’t he say, ‘Verdammte Hundt,’ or was that after you came in?’

“ ‘I can’t bend my fingers. I can’t bend my toes. They tingle so. It’s maddening. They tickle. They itch me and I have no way to scratch them.’

“ ‘Didn’t you question him? He *did* know about the Manchester, except the casualty to their colonel.

Then he went outside and you stayed in to write your report. Before he threw the bomb.’

“ ‘The bomb. That’s it. He threw the bomb. I caught the bomb and it exploded. What happened then?’

“ ‘Oh, Davey, Davey! You’ll be all right. Really you will. I want George to know that I’m all right too. That I’m not crazy. That Hartman did come back again. Tell George. You are the only one who saw him every time.’

“ ‘What happened after the bomb exploded? I want to know, do you hear? Are my hands gone? I can’t hold a gun without hands. I can’t play polo without hands. My God. No feet. What will I put in the stirrups?’

“I couldn’t stand it any longer. The thing had gone far enough. It was too terrible. These two men who loved each other, each sounding the notes of his own song, the clashing tones making a horrible discord. Had they been able to realize what they were doing, they would have

been mortified with shame. Two men who would have given up their lives for each other had become monomaniacs. With sufficient cause, I grant you. And through it all, the rain. Cold, driving rain

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that was soon to chill the bones of one of them. The telephone call, forgotten for a time, came back to mind.

"I told John that headquarters wanted him at once. A military command seemed to be the only voice that would control him. He left the hut to get the rest of his clothes. Boyne asked me the same question again."

"You couldn't tell him the truth, George. You lied to him, didn't you?"

"Like a gentleman, I hope. Told him that some of the bones had been broken in both hands and left foot. That he couldn't feel the hands or feet because of the plaster casts. That there was a cast on his right thigh too. At least that was the truth. It seemed to satisfy him. He gave a sigh of relief, letting his head go back on the pillow. I ventured a question for John's sake. 'What is this story about Hartman?' There was no answer. I looked at Boyne, then quickly reached for his pulse. He had gone to sleep. Content with my lies. Going out to get an orderly to sit with him, I ran into John coming through the doorway. 'Did he say anything about Hartman before he went to sleep?' Hartman! Would I ever hear the end of him? He filled John's mind to the exclusion of everything else.

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I was too tired to listen to any more at the moment. Besides, he was going to be late at headquarters. I got John away on an ambulance, telling him that Boyne

would be moved to a hospital in a few days and that we'd talk about Hartman there. 'God bless you, George, and take care of Davey,' he called out as the wheels started moving."

"You must have been glad to get him off your hands with a case like Boyne's to look after. Got any pipe tobacco?"

Chapter Eight

"RIGHT BEHIND you. Can of American stuff sent to me from Virginia."

Chilton filled his pipe. Lit it and took a long draw. He was a great pipe smoker. Covarrubias or one of those cartoonist chaps drew a circle for a head and stuck a pipe out of the side. Everyone knew who was meant. Chilton puffed with satisfaction.

"Damn good, George. It could stand a bit of Perique mixed in. What happened to Boyne then?"

"We kept him under for a couple of days. All the wounds drained properly. Looked as if there was a sporting chance for his recovery. He got enough strength to tell me a little more of what happened to him. And he was such a sportsman. The rain stopped. We got him to railhead and on a hospital train to Camiers. Godwin was doing such good work there healing amputations with light rays that I thought it would be better than sending Boyne to Rouen. The second night after he got to Camiers a flock of Gothas went over and bombed the hospital out of existence. Poor Boyne."

"At least he never knew what happened to him. What about Fenton?"

"They kept him under escort in the village that housed divisional headquarters. Clarke and some other fellow in charge of him. John wouldn't talk to them. Didn't know Clarke well and the other chap was a

stranger. John would sit all day and far into the night staring out of a window overlooking a side road that led to the cemetery nearby. When he heard of Boyne's death he became violent again. You see, he had hoped that Boyne would verify all he had told me. To help straighten things out with me. With himself. Neither of his escorts understood his raving. Wanted to have him confined in a madhouse but the orders were to keep him where he was until after the court-martial. His evidence might be necessary. Headquarters considered his mental illness as temporary, and would possibly clear up by itself. We didn't do much with psychiatry in those days.

"John sent a message for me to come to see him, but I couldn't get away. As a result I heard nothing more until Clarke passed through to rejoin the regiment after it was all over. He stopped for lunch and told me what he knew, building it up into a dramatic scenario. He

was one of the crowd of young moderns who had joined up from Oxford. The sort who tried to write startling and frenzied literature, the while drooling at the mouth with pleasure at their calculated daring. John was in no state to go before the court-martial. He had sworn to kill Hartman if he could only get near him. 'Sounded like a Sicilian vendetta,' said Clarke."

"Was the spy really Hartman?"

"No one knew for certain. The man protested for a long time that he was William Harper of the Manchester regiment. That he had been shell-shocked

at the same time Colonel Fisher was killed and unable to remember anything before or since."

"Damn clever scoundrel, that. Weaving the information he got from Boyne right into his story, eh? Clever scoundrel."

"Not a scoundrel, Chilly. Just a brave man who wasn't clever all the time. If he had been able to control his temper when they spoke of the Kaiser he would have got safely away. Now he stuck to his story. Harper of the Manchesters. There were no incriminating papers on him. They found a Record of Officers Services in his pocket. Around his neck the identity disc of one William Harper, Lieutenant 2/14 Battalion,

Manchester Regiment. C. E. You know, Church of England. Looking up the records of the battalion it was found that the original Harper was reported missing after a raid early in the preceding month. Two weeks later what seemed to be his half-stripped body was found rotting in No Man's Land. Close search of the prisoner Harper disclosed a small tattoo mark on his right arm. It looked like a coronet with a unicorn's head rising out of it and below some initials that seemed to be W. v. H. I say looked like because Clarke told me that neither design nor letters were quite clear owing to the scratches across the whole mark. They had evidently been scraped with the top of a cigarette tin to make them illegible. The prisoner said he had scratched his arm stumbling against some barbed wire.

“Clarke gave me all these details with an incredible embroidery of his own small talk. He had been tremendously impressed with the ceremony of a field general court-martial. The first he had attended. The long table with the swords pointing toward the accused. The Bible vieing in size with the weighty tomes of Military Law. ‘Three choices of a way to Heaven,’ Clarke said. He spoke of the attitude of the judge-advocate

and the members of the court. Said they leaned backwards in their efforts to be fair to a man who knew as well as they did that his number was up. Went through the facts impartially. Boyne’s report was put in evidence. Leeson and Clarke corroborated in telling the same story.

“Then the court called for Fenton. Until then not a word had come from the prisoner. The court was informed that Fenton was available but that it would be inadvisable to call him. The prisoner, through the officer detailed to defend him, made a protest. Asked and received permission to address the court. Fenton had accused him. Why couldn’t Fenton face him? He could tell them why. Because Fenton was insane. An insane man who mistook him for a German named Hartman. Mr. Clarke, who had already testified, could tell them that Captain Fenton was continually calling for a man named Hartman. The resemblance in names —Harper-Hartman—no doubt confused a man whose mind was unbalanced.

“Perhaps there was a physical resemblance, too. He had been put to great annoyance because his blond hair gave him a Teutonic appearance. Did he speak English like a German? Would they sentence him to death

on the word of a lunatic who was unfit and unable to make his own accusation? He appealed to their sense of fair play. To their British sense of fair play. He made a gallant plea for himself, at the same time cooking the goose for John’s sanity. The court was almost convinced of his innocence. In spite of Clarke and Leeson having heard him swear in German the evidence was purely circumstantial. While they might prove he wasn’t William Harper, they had no way to prove who he was. As for throwing a bomb at Major Boyne, that had been a sheer accident. He had meant to throw it clear of the trench, but had stumbled. Oh, he said that he had sworn in German in the same way as we all used the words Schweinehund, Strafe, Kamerad, Mienenwerfer and so on, in our daily lingua franca which was a mixture of English, German and French phrases and technical terms.”

“Damn good argument, George. Even the Tommies talked that way. It’s the first time that British soldiers in a foreign country didn’t think the natives could understand English if they only spoke it loudly enough. How they used to yell at the Boers and the Hindus!”

“They did it in France too in 1914. As you say, it was a good argument and Clarke felt certain that the

man would be set free, or at most kept under arrest until there was more time for investigating him. When the noon recess was called the last day of the court, Clarke, Leeson and several others went as usual to headquarters mess for lunch. They found an American war correspondent there. One of these up and doing fellows. I can't remember his name. It's in the papers often. He'd been everywhere. Knew everyone. Been in eighteen or nineteen wars. Oh, I have his name. It's Archer. Captain James Archer. Keen chap. He'd been on the German side the first years of the war.

"When General Cavendish mentioned the case of Harper, Archer asked to see the prisoner. Thought he might recognize him. He didn't know the chap when he saw him but said he looked like an A. D. C. of General von Bulow. Then Archer told us how he had seen the Germans trap a French spy. They had sent him a parcel wrapped in a French newspaper and watched to see if he read it. Of course we took the hint. Sent in a clean set of underwear wrapped in a Berliner *Tageblatt*. Then watched through a peep-hole in the floor above. The poor devil was glad of the clean things. He threw the newspaper on the floor without a second glance. Took a sponge bath. Got

into the fresh change. When half dressed he suddenly stopped what he was doing and began shaving. He had already shaved that morning, so the watchers became suspicious. He lingered so long over the business of lathering his face. Of stropping the razor. All the time sitting before the mirror which had been in his

haversack. Finally the intelligence officers upstairs figured it out. Harper was reading the newspaper through the mirror!

"That was a step forward. Now for the next one. Harper was confined in a room with barred windows in a wing at the back of headquarters. Behind the room was a large courtyard, quite empty. Dressed as a French peasant they sent Wharton of the Eighth Hussars, wooden sabots, broom and all, to sweep up the yard. Wharton had gone to school in Germany. Spoke the language flawlessly. They had dropped him behind the German lines from airplanes a number of times and he always brought back the desired information.

"Wharton approached Harper's window, working industriously with his broom. He hummed a German song, at the same time looking over his shoulder every minute. As if afraid of being watched. Harper paid no attention to him. Then Wharton swept in front

of the window, counting slowly in German. 'Einz. Zwei. Drei. Was ist Deine Nummer? Ich bin Zwei und Zwanzig.' One. Two. Three. What is your number? I am twenty-two. 'Vier. Funf. Sechs.' On went the numbers, sung to the old German tune. No angler ever coaxed a wary trout from under a rock with his fly rod more skillfully than Wharton played the man behind the bars. Harper moved closer to the window, keeping his back to it. Finally Wharton changed to a formula often used by German spies. 'Number Seven'—meaning Number Seven Wilhelm-strasse—'Number

Seven wants information. Quick, before someone comes. You will never get away. They ordered your grave dug for to-morrow. Too bad. Who holds Sector 56?' "

"Sounds brutal now, looking back. That was part of the glory of war, I suppose."

"So they called it, old man. Of course, every army did the same thing to the other's spies if they caught them. This fellow was the canniest they had ever come across. When it seemed hopeless, Wharton went through ostentatious preparations for leaving, still singing about Number Seven. Suddenly Harper started a song of his own. 'The British Grenadiers,' of all songs.

Neatly fitted between the English words came German numbers. The numbers our Intelligence had been waiting for, with the word 'Cavaliers' replacing 'Grenadiers.'

"Harper's number was 81. The 27th were holding the front of Sector 56. The 2nd Cavalry Division, attached to the 14th Corps, 3rd Army. The sector was lightly held. The fellows upstairs wrote the whole thing down. Like an acrostic, you know. Easy to read once you have the key. They signalled to Wharton that he could go. They had enough information. As he started away Harper called to him loudly in English. Had he any cigarettes? Fumbling in his pockets, he approached the bars. Whispered, 'Wie heissen Sie?' What is your name? The man opened his mouth to

answer. ‘Har—’ The door was opened. An intelligence officer came in.”

“Seems a pity. After covering himself so cleverly, to be let down trying to help his own country. What did he say to them?”

“Harper, or Hartman, never spoke again until the court had passed the death sentence. When asked if he had any statement to make he sprang to his feet. Clarke said it was like a tiger backed against the wall by a pack of dogs. No pretence now of being an Englishman.

Bursting with race-consciousness, he predicted that the German Armies would drive us into the Channel to die like the rats of Norway. That Germany would fight to a victorious end. That Deutschland Uber Alles was no idle boast. He wound up proudly, ‘I failed in my mission, so I deserve this end?”

“It’s a shame to kill a man like that. The world has too few people of strength. Of character. So they shot him without ever finding out who he was?”

“Since he wouldn’t talk about himself they could find out nothing. He had thrown away his signet ring when captured. No one but John knew of its existence. The crest tattooed on his arm was indistinct so there was no thought of looking it up in the Almanach de Gotha. The Manchesters had lost a lot of officers up north so no one came down to identify him. When asked if he wanted a priest he said no. He wanted to talk to Captain Fenton. To find out why he called him Hartman. Of course it was impossible for him to see

anyone. That applied to John as well who wanted to see Harper. To question Harper before they shot him dead. What tragedy could have been averted if these two men could have spoken to each other for five minutes! Clarke brought the news to John that Harper was to be killed

the next morning. At daybreak. I don't know who selected that hour for executions. Damned inconvenient for everybody concerned. John demanded that he be allowed to talk to Harper immediately. Wanted Clarke to get in touch with the divisional commander. Corps commander. Army commander. With Haig, the commander-in-chief. There was a terrible scene lasting long into the night. Most of it incomprehensible to Clarke.

"John's outcry was all of alive and dead. Dead and alive. 'Hartman, you're dead. Twice dead. You can't be alive. You're alive and can't be dead. They can't shoot you. They can't kill a dead man. A dead man must be dead and a live man must be alive. Hartman. Hartman. Hartman.' So it kept on. Clarke said that it sounded like a gramophone record that had been cracked, making the needle voice the same words in never ending repetition. He tried to get John to explain what was on his mind. Thought it might quiet him. Instead, John abused him. Said that Clarke was the one who kept Hartman away from him. That it was a conspiracy to rob him. They wanted to take away his sanity. His place in the regiment. Everything he had. Alive or dead.

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“He finally wore himself out. Fell into his chair by the shuttered window. Dozed from exhaustion. Clarke and the other officer were able to relax a bit. Perhaps he’d be better in the morning, they hoped, settling into their chairs which guarded the exits from the room. The quiet of the night, now that John was still, was so soothing. John slouched in his chair. His head on his chest gently rose and fell with his heavy breathing like a swollen metronome beating time with a hypnotic pendulum.

“Clarke tried to fight sleep. He said that he remembered thinking his early idea of Hell was of a place where all the devils had three tongues and talked incessantly of Life and Death. Then he went blank. Seemed to hear the tramp, tramp of soldiers’ feet as the crash of splintering wood brought him and the other officer to their feet. John had heard the firing squad clumping along the hard roadway. He was trying to smash the heavy wooden shutters to get to Hartman who marched in the centre of the group, hands tied behind him.

“The two officers exerted all their strength to hold John. He was screaming through the broken slats, ‘Hartman! Tell me you’re Hartman! Are you Hartman?’

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The prisoner stopped for a moment, so unexpectedly that the rear files trod on his heels. Bare-headed and coatless, with the same arrogance as the French aristocrats going to the guillotine he answered John’s

despairing cry, ‘Are you Hartman?’, with a gallant mockery. ‘I’ll tell you when we meet in hell.’ Shouting hoarsely John insisted, ‘You must tell me. Who are you?’ The prisoner came to attention, clicking his heels and instinctively trying to bring his bound hand to his head in salute. ‘Leutnant von Hartman, Fünftes Garde Regiment,’ he said.”

“My Lord, George. The very words he used in the trench. Remember, George? When he had those abdominal bayonet wounds and Fenton gave him rum. Remember?” Chilton was quite excited.

“I remember it well. Gave me a chill when I heard of it. Let me go on. The officer in charge of the squad broke up the farce. ‘Stop annoying the prisoner!’ he ordered sharply. ‘Quick March!’ The oddly dignified procession went down the side road towards the faint streaks of light breaking over the cemetery. John was silent. Bewildered by what had happened. By what his own eyes had seen. By what his own ears had heard. Was the man really Hartman? Of course he was. He

looked like him. Just as if Madame Tussaud had made a Hartman of wax. One that could be knocked down and set up again. He couldn't be anyone else. John was certain of that. Clarke thought the prisoner had only said he was Hartman in a final bravado. To leave a haunting memory perpetually annoying a man who had the thing on his brain. No matter what Clarke said, John knew better. It must be Hartman. No one would come back to him again and again unless it was Hartman.

"Clarke gave John some drink and helped undress him. This boy who had been so fine, mentally and physically, was like a shivering, helpless infant, choking over the liquor being forced down his throat. He lay shaking under the bedcovers, unable to cope with the thoughts that whirled through his head like the drifting screen of a sandstorm, and with the same insistency.

"How many ways could they kill a man in war? How many? He could only get as far as swords, bayonets and bullets. Then a gust of wind would obliterate all that was written in the sand and he would start over again. Swords. Bayonets. Bullets. He had killed Hartman with the sword himself. He had finished the work of the bayonets on Hartman with rum.

Now Hartman was going to be killed with bullets just as if his own hands were firing the rifles. They couldn't kill him again. They were wasting ammunition. They couldn't kill a dead man. How

many times could a man die? After all, Hartman was a man. Not a cat with nine lives. Aman! No. A cat! A mad Cheshire cat that grinned. Grinned through the faces of other people. Grinned through portraits. Grinned over a Prussian collar through the silks and ribbons and laces of another age."

"What an amazing pattern must have run through Fenton's mind!"

"The more amazing thing is that he could reconstruct it for me later. Some cells of his brain must have been dormant while the other cells threw these ideas around, so to speak, in kaleidoscopic rotation. However, now he lay on the bed. To Clarke's eyes he seemed calm, except for the physical ague that shook his body every few minutes. His wide open eyes were fixed on the ceiling. Like the cold slap of the sea against a cliff came the reports of rifles fired in a volley, rattling into the room. John, Clarke and the other fellow knew what it meant. They flinched involuntarily. It's hard for a soldier to think of a man going

down before bullets without the fighting chance of having a weapon in his own hands. Clarke tried to be casual as he said, 'Napoo. Fini.' The other fellow just lit a cigarette. There was silence in the room for an instant as the sound waves from the cemetery dissolved into the outside farmyard noises announcing the dawn. A rooster crowed. John went completely out of his mind. Laughing. Screaming. Wildly, horribly he

cried, ‘I’ve killed him again! I’ve killed him again! Hartman! For God’s sake — don’t come back!’ ”

Chapter Nine

CHILTON GOT up and paced the room with quick nervous steps. So different from his usual deliberate, measured pace. As I poured a drink I looked at his face. The hearty red complexion, colored by good food, drink and open air, had gone a deeper shade. The story of the repeated appearance of this spectre which turned into flesh and blood when touched, instead of dissolving into air, had got under his crusty exterior. In the years I've known Chilton nothing had ever stirred him so much as my tale of the wrecking of John's life. I don't mind saying that it upset me when I first heard it. Of course, I got it in bits, with a shock each time. Now, telling it all together, the story was a disturbing one. Yet too fascinating to let go. Interesting from both professional and human standpoints. The wrecking of a man's life. A man whose only fault, if it can be called that, was his obedience to duty as a soldier. Strange idea, that. I asked Chilton if I should go on. He turned on me like a wild bull.

"Go on? I should hope so! You've got me all of a

dither, George Forrester. What about his wife all this time? What did it mean to her, now that he was a hopeless case? Of course, they shipped him home?"

"In a straight-jacket. Hopeless. Broken. After a week in a military hospital Fuzzy managed to have him shipped to a private nursing home in London. Audrey came to see him. His father and mother came

to see him. He didn't know any of them. To him they were just charming visitors whose evident distress at some incomprehensible thing was entirely beyond him. Unlike most mental cases, he didn't become slovenly or careless of his personal appearance. Went through the same physical exercises each morning as he had done as a cadet at Sandhurst, repeating aloud the detailed instructions for the drill before each movement. Insisted on shaving daily.

"After breakfast he copied the nominal roll of his old troop, marking the N. C. O.s and men present or absent or sick according to his fancy. His original roll-book had been in his kit bag, but he didn't copy it accurately. Some of the names were of men dead for a year or two. One name was always on the roll. The name of Hartman. It had lost any particular significance to him. Just a name that he remembered. The

rest of the day he sat peacefully in a chair, smoking his pipe and looking out at the sky and trees like an old man reviewing his life from a club window. It was tragic, you know. More pitiful by far than raving dementia because there seemed to be nothing wrong with him except his silence. Wouldn't talk to anyone except to thank the people who served him. Outside the landscape only one thing had any interest for him. A cat. The pet of the nursing home. It would come into his room often, jump up on a chair and sit staring at his fascinated eyes. They would stay that way for about an hour, the only sound being an occasional faint mew

from the cat that was puzzled by his immobility. Then the out-stared cat would swish its tail and pad out of the room, casting backward glances as it went. Iris wrote it all to me after she had gone one day to visit him with Audrey. As an outsider, it bordered on the ludicrous to her, but Audrey could scarcely look at the macabre pantomime of the animal. It mirrored her own perplexity so faithfully. Too faithfully."

"Did anyone tell her why Fenton lost his reason."

"No. No one really knew except myself. Nothing would be gained if I told them. They'd think him crazier than ever. Perhaps that I was a bit touched

as well. They gave the cause as war strain with possible shell shock, so I let it go at that. Besides, while I'm not superstitious, I had no urge to stir up the bones or ghost of Hartman now that his business had been properly attended to for good, I hoped, by a British burial party."

"I don't blame you, George. Wouldn't touch it with a ten foot pole myself. Don't like monkeying with the supernatural. Did they get any good people to see him?"

"Yes. Guthrie and Davidson. Top holers, you'll agree. John's calmness and quiet gave them hope. When or how he would recover no one could say. They tried any number of experiments. The Plechnikoff test. The Erkoll test. The Fleischauer test. None of these seemed to stir memory. They thought it safe to send him home, with the attendant who had been looking after him, of course. The orders were to humor him

within reason as long as there was no indication of violence. I saw their reports later. In all their experience they had never come across a case quite like this one."

"I can believe that. His wife must have been jolly glad to have him home again. At least he was alive and whole."

"She was overjoyed at being able to look after him herself. Yet there was a subconscious repugnance which came from tending a grown person with infantile mentality, no matter how near and dear. She wasn't aware of it. She would have been humiliated beyond description if she had discovered it. If anyone has discovered it. As a matter of fact, I only realized it much later when piecing things together. It would have been more dangerous to her if she hadn't made another discovery. A most important one. Poor old Fuzzy was greatly disturbed by John's condition. So was his dear mother. Mark you, Chilly. What I'm going to say now is with all respect to the older Fentons, because people are what they are because of what they are. Is that too complicated?"

Chilton nodded. Puzzled.

"As I told you before, the Fentons had a strong pride of family. A tradition. The chemistry of their bodies, the direction of their minds were rooted in this tradition. Fentons did this. Fentons didn't do that. The tradition, the guiding thought, the fixed idea, call it what you will, had made them what they were. None had ever started a campaign without being able to

finish it. None had never been without a male heir. Oh, I must

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take that back. One had a girl for a first born. He was so annoyed with his wife that he never spoke to her again or tried to have another child. Now, on account of John, there could be no male heir. Not even a female heir. The family fortune and estates would go to that boy of eight years of age, the son of Fuzzy's dead cousin. They found that the child was being badly brought up in Ireland by his mother. The woman was a Sinn Feiner, a pacifist, a communist, in fact everything that the mother of a Fenton shouldn't be. Since she was a decent living woman, the child couldn't be taken away from her legally.

"It was more than annoying. Audrey grew tired of hearing Fuzzy talk about the woman and her child whenever he came home, anger in his voice. The mother, usually so calm, would listen with a warlike glint in her eyes, prodding him on with a sharp word. The parents were sweet and kind to John but Audrey felt that something was seeping in, something that would destroy any happiness they might ever have. Remember the story in school of the little Dutch boy who found a leak in a dyke and tried to plug it with his finger? It was like that with Audrey. She tried to stop the thought that came trickling through from the older Fentons.

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That they would rather have had a dead hero than a live Fenton who couldn't carry on. John's helplessness

was their helplessness and they hated being helpless.

"She tried to be light. Gay. Happy. To pretend they didn't feel that way. It made her all the more devoted to John, arousing the deep maternal instinct which lay within waiting for a child to release it. He was her child. She must give him love, she told herself. The love which the others withheld. It was up to her to cherish him. Hadn't she taken him for better or worse? Until death would part them? But wasn't he dead already? Half dead at least. The physical machine that ate, drank and slept was an automaton. Not a live man. It tortured her to think of it. She must banish these thoughts that crept into her mind against her will. She must keep the love fire burning. She swore to do it. At night in her lonely room she would cry herself to sleep. The love fire was like the cold chemical flame that Indian fakirs put their hands into. All in all, it was a lugubrious picture."

"What a dreary outlook for these people. Dammit, man. The thing sounds like one of those gay Russian yams. Happy affairs. All wolves, snow, Siberia, famine and broken hearts."

"Doesn't it? Well, thank the Lord it changed. Almost as strangely and abruptly as it began. Guthrie had sent for John. Further examination. Audrey and the mother drove him up to town, the attendant sitting with the chauffeur, so John was well looked after. November tenth, I think was the date. That or the day before. The plan was that they should spend a day or two in London, letting John see people, hear noises,

and all that sort of thing. If it didn't excite him, perhaps a theater might be ventured. Each day Guthrie could make his observations. There had been a report of an armistice several days before, but a prompt denial had put it out of everyone's head. On the morning of the eleventh Guthrie had examined John. Found him just the same. No better. No worse. Suggested that John be taken to a railway terminal. Hear the noise of the locomotives. See soldiers traveling. It might start him thinking."

"That is clever reasoning. Guthrie was always sound. How did it affect Fenton?"

"No one ever got to know. When they left Harley Street it was decided to go to Charing Cross. As they drove through Trafalgar Square sirens started blowing. Bells ringing. Crowds swarmed into the street. Hysterical.

Joyful. Incoherent. Masses that roared, cheered and hurrahed. The car had to go slowly through the people who streamed into the roadway. Audrey leaned out to ask what the noise was about. Disjointed replies came to her from a dozen throats. 'We've napooed the Kaiser! No more fighting! 'urray fer'aig! Fritzy's on the run! Our boys will be coming home!' It was like ashes in the mouth of Mrs. Fenton. Boys coming home! Their boy had come home, leaving most of himself out there. They turned into the Strand near where we came across Audrey tonight, and drove through the iron gates of the court of Charing Cross Station."

“Silly thing to do. They should have taken Fenton right back to his hotel, out of that mob.”

“I would have said the same as you, old man. Luckily, to them orders were orders. Doctor Guthrie had said a railway terminal with its noises, so a railway terminal it had to be. The yard was blocked with cars and taxis, so they got out inside the gates to walk the rest of the way. Just clear of their car, a crowd of all sorts swooped down on them. Soldiers, sailors, tradesmen, girls poured on them like a flood of lava coming down the side of a volcano. It was a regular Carnival. A

pandemonium of noises. Every motor car sounding its horn as if the driver had an iron hand. Church bells pealing their upper registers gaily and persistently. The people in the streets singing the different war songs with strident discords. The booming of Big Ben, overtoning the unbalanced paean of relief at the overthrow of the War God. No more darkened streets. No more death from the skies. No more good-byes. No more food queues.

“An Australian Tommy dove in between John and Audrey, separating them as he flung a pound note into the hands of an old flower woman, took her tray of posies and scattered them over the heads of the rushing crowd. John was swept along with them, ricochetting from person to person, a log bounding through a rocky gorge. The attendant had seized Audrey in time to prevent her being trampled underfoot, while Mrs. Fenton in turn hung onto the man. John was nowhere

to be seen. They could do nothing to find him after several futile calls of ‘John! John!’ To look for him in the crowd was like trying to select a pattern in a rapidly moving kaleidoscope. The two women and the attendant slowly worked their way back to the car, the women to go on to the hotel while the attendant searched the vicinity of Charing Cross.

“In the meantime, John was having the time of his life. A carefree child away from his nurse, following a military band as it marched down the street. John was in civilian clothes, of course, but one could see he was a soldier. An old woman chucked him under the chin. ‘Well, dearie, it’s over. You know wot you can tell the sergeant-major to do, don’t yer?’ A man took his arm and offered to stand him a drink. John followed into a pub, glad to get away from the racket outside. He remembered having a couple of drinks. Felt fine. Gay. He laughed when the man told him the story of the Scotch sergeant and the French girl. The man was just coming to the point of another story, about a German officer who gave champagne to a newsboy, when John walked out unnoticed as the fellow kept on with his tale.

“John walked up the Strand and found himself back at Charing Cross. He went under the clock and out to the train sheds. That seemed to awaken something familiar in his mind. An empty hospital train was on the point of leaving for Dover and without any interruption John got into a carriage just as the guards were shutting the doors. He was evidently taken for

one of the civilian staff as he sat in the corner of a first-class compartment. The movement of the train put him to sleep.

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"A strident ship's whistle woke him up and he found the train at the Dover quay side. There seemed nothing to do but go aboard the ship. He was beginning to feel awfully hungry. Hours since breakfast time, you know. The hot odors of cooking food from the galley beckoned to his nose as he looked for a deck chair. He felt in his pocket. There was some money there, so he went to the dining saloon. He ordered food from the steward and as he ate the feeling of lightness that had been in his head seemed to dissolve the way fog does when a brisk wind sweeps the downs. He wasn't quite sure of where he was or why he was going, but that didn't seem important. He knew that he had to go somewhere. Since no one stopped him he was evidently going the right way, he thought, as he stepped off the boat at Calais. A sergeant stepped up to him and saluted. 'What regiment, sir?'

"Before John could answer, some one called his name. Young Candlish, A. D. C. to MacDuffie who commanded the 1st Cavalry Division, was there in the general's big staff car. Going back to the Cavalry Corps who were moving toward Brussels. Candlish didn't know anything of what had happened to John. Thought he was returning from leave. John turned from the

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sergeant and, without a word, climbed into the Rolls. Candlish, glad of the company, grinned and waved a signal to the chauffeur and the car slid silently across the flat country between Calais and Belgium that we can see so comfortably now from the windows of the Golden Arrow. Candlish was full of chat. You know how young A. D. C.s are, away from their generals?"

"It's the only chance the young blighters get to talk. Outside of saying, 'Yes, sir—no, sir—I'll see, sir.' "

"Exactly. I thought you'd understand, general!"

"Hmmph!"

"As I was saying when you interrupted me, Candlish was full of chat. Chat of what had occurred in the war, in world history, in social life at home, as far as it affected him. John sat back comfortably as the miles fed swiftly under the car wheels, like a ribbon of tape into a giant sewing machine, flowing out behind them embroidered with clouds of white and grey dust from the chalky road. The feeling of peace was heavy on the land. Here and there a plough drawn by a yoke of oxen opened the earth to the delight of the seagulls, screaming as they dove into the new furrows to fill themselves with the worms and grubs turned up by the plough-share. The wind whistled its own aeolian notes on the

glass of the windscreen. All the sounds were soft and gentle. No rumble of artillery. No hammer of machine guns. Even the shrill voice of Candlish lost its edge as he prattled in a breath of Lady Diana, the Americans, Ludendorf, the First Division, the revue at the

Alhambra, the price of partridge in Dieppe, the possibility of marching to Berlin and other such weighty subjects that tax the minds of young officers with staff appointments.

"It was really a big moment for Candlish. Having the floor to himself. He kept on talking without waiting for an answer and the car bumped over rough spots in the road often enough for John's head to nod, seemingly in acquiescence. As a matter of fact, John was paying no attention whatever to his companion. In a pleasant haze of well-being he was slowly trying to orient himself. It seemed proper and fitting that he should be traveling across France in a staff car. He had wangled that before. Once by tipping a military policeman who was on point duty at the cross-roads outside of St. Pol. He smiled as the incident slowly came back, just as Candlish spoke of the increase in pay for officers. 'Glad you agree,' said Candlish, going on to discuss the chances for hunting after Christmas.

"John's mind went back to that rainy night when he and the little Canadian major named Adamson had given the military policeman ten francs as a tip to stop a car that would take them up towards Arras. John had met the major at the Officers' Club in St. Pol where he had gone on an afternoon off from the reserve billets. The major, well fortified and cheery with drink, had come in his own car but sent it off somewhere before an urgent message had come through to the club for all officers to rejoin their units immediately. One of those frequent emergency calls that petered out after one

broke one's neck getting back. John had gone to the cross-roads hoping to get some conveyance, whether in a staff car, lorry or dispatch-rider's sidecar, French or English. As he stood near the policeman, the major drifted up through the dark and rain, waving a hand torch in one hand while trying the impossible feat of concealing a bottle of Scotch in the other.

"After a little time the headlights of a closed car silhouetted the three figures in the road as it slowed down in response to the policeman's signal. The chauffeur called out sharply in English to find out why the car was stopped. The policeman explained briefly that two officers had been recalled and could they get a lift

towards Arras. The chauffeur opened the door of the car and stuck his head inside to explain. John heard a muffled conference. The driver opened the door wide. 'Will you gentlemen please step in?' John and the major tumbled into the car which was as black as your hat and scrambled for the two jump seats. The car started with a jerk, the wheels slipping in the muddy road and John spun half way around in his seat. He saw two indistinct figures in uniform lounging against the cushions as he apologized for intruding. One of the figures murmured a few words accepting his apology. The other figure was silent. Lurching through the darkness seemed to stir the major's social spirit. He had unknowingly dropped his electric hand torch while getting into the car and was pressing one of the dimples on the bottle of Scotch under the impression

that he could light up the interior of the car before thanking his hosts. John heard him mumble, ‘Damn battery burned out!’ as he opened a window to dispose of it. Suddenly the major realized that he was throwing away a good bottle of whiskey. With an awed, ‘My God!’ he abruptly shut the window again, laughing heartily. ‘Have a drink, boys? It’s good stuff. Haig and Haig. Sorry I haven’t any glasses—’

“Indistinct refusals came from the back seat. The major, nothing daunted, drew the cork, waved good health with the bottle and drank by himself. ‘Well, that’s that,’ he said, putting back the cork. Then he began talking of the war. What he would do if he was in command. Criticized the work of the staff. Tore the French, Belgians, Italians and Portuguese to bits. Belittled the German High Command. Said that he believed they had Chinese women dressed as men in the Chinese Labour Battalions. These foreigners! They bring their own rations with them. Ha-ha! No one else laughed. The two silent men seemed to have withdrawn still further into their cushions and John was thinking of Audrey. John looked at his watch. The luminous dial showed that two hours had gone by. The car suddenly came to a stop and the chauffeur looked in. ‘Arras just ahead, gentlemen. We turn off here.’ John got up. With a brief thank you he gathered his stick and gloves. The little major, who had taken several applications from his bottle, couldn’t be quite so abrupt. Standing on the running board, in the drizzling rain, he told his silent hosts that he was

Major Charles Henry Adamson, from Sarnia, Ontario, commanding the 16th Reserve Park of the Canadian

Army Service Corps with headquarters in the Soule Chateau just west of Arras. Had tea in his mess at four every day. He'd be glad if they'd drop in. 'Don't forget the name,' he admonished them. 'Adamson. Major Adamson. What's yours?' The only figure who had spoken during the trip leaned forward as the major cleared the running board. John got the impression of a familiar, gravely handsome face with smiling lips that answered a single word, 'Haig!'

"The door closed and the motor car passed into the night, its red tail light mocking the major. The little man stood as if built into the road. To save his feelings John quietly said, 'Good night,' and walked on to find his regiment.

"Candlish broke in on him. 'You'll find the 27th has its share of misfits. Conscientious objectors and all that sort. Even the officers in the last drafts are silly kids or protected hold backs. We call them the Victory Draft. More are going to be sent out now the fighting is over. That's why the corps commander sent MacDuffie to the War Office to protest. The cavalry would prefer being short-handed with its trusted men to having a full roster of crocks and incompetents."

"The A. D. M. S. sent me over on the same job,

George. I met MacDuffie on the boat. Must have passed Fenton on the docks."

“No doubt. Candlish kept on with his small talk and through it John began to find himself. The incident of the staff car at St. Pol must have occurred a year before. What had happened in the meantime? Bit by bit other things came to him. Little flashes of regimental life. Vignettes of dugouts and trenches. Glimpses of Colonel Long and Major Boyne. Something had happened to Boyne. He was sure of that but couldn’t think what it was. How long ago had it happened? He didn’t want to ask anyone. They’d think it queer if he didn’t know. And to-day they were suddenly saying that the war was over. Which side had won? It must have been the Allies or Candlish wouldn’t be speeding towards Belgium.

“The early November night rushed at them, lights showing in villages that had only known heavily shuttered windows for years. Candlish leaned forward to speak to the chauffeur and the car stopped at an auberge. ‘We’ll eat here, Fenton, if you don’t mind.’ Stiff from sitting, John was glad to get out and stretch. He looked around in mild curiosity. Part of his regular life, it seemed. The inn was like so many others he had seen.

The well polished counter serving double duty as bar and display case. The aubergist in checkered apron smoking his pipe while drawing beer at the counter. The woman of the house bustling from the kitchen with plates of steaming food, placing them before a couple of French N. C. O.s who politely rose to attention as Candlish and John came to a nearby table.

“As John sat down he heard one of the Frenchmen say sotto voce, ‘C’est un espion Anglais, avec un officier de 1’etat major.’ The other grunted in reply, digging his knife and fork into the food. ‘So they think I’m an English spy being taken up the line by a staff officer,’ thought John as he ordered an omelet. ‘Do I look like a spy?’ he wondered. Spy. Spy. The word kept striking at his ears. He had had some connection with a spy at one time. He heard the Frenchman telling his comrade of a spy dropped from an airplane into the English lines.

“ ‘You had something to do with catching a spy, didn’t you, Fenton?’ Candlish had heard the Frenchmen talking. ‘Yes,’John answered. When he stopped there the conversation languished. Candlish thought John’s modesty about his own achievements kept back further discussion of the subject. The aubergiste scurried to the

table with plates, cups and saucers. John was glad of her coming. He couldn’t say more about the spy because he couldn’t remember anything. Beyond the fact that he had been in a dugout with a spy, his mind was sealed off as effectively as if you had built a concrete wall around it.”

Chapter Ten

"BUT, GEORGE, if his mind was a total blank about the last Hartman episode, how was he able to give you his impressions of his state around the time of the court-martial?"

"That came much later. When he was in Germany and entirely well. I went over the whole business with him. Told him about Boyne. About what I had seen and heard. What Clarke had seen and heard. The assembled facts stimulated his memory."

"Interesting. Damn interesting. Go on with it. Did he find the 27th?"

"Yes, but not without a lot of trouble. Candlish stopped at Corps Headquarters to get the location and was told that the 27th was near Charleroi. Being an expert wangler, as all A. D. C.s must be, he got a dispatch rider to take John in a side car to hunt the regiment. Away the motorcycle went, spitting and snorting, taking corners on two wheels, John clinging to the sides of the little canoe and wondering if he had survived the shells and bullets of the war to make a Roman

holiday for a D. R., whose idea of speed was in two phases. Fast and faster.

"Bonfires winked and waved in the distance for the first time since 1914. The flu epidemic had started, you know, and the troops were bivouacked in the open instead of being billeted in towns and villages. Provost

marshals pulled the side-car up in several towns. One reprimanded John for being out of uniform. ‘You chaps tear off to Paris for a good time while we have to stick in these bloody villages to look after stragglers,’ he complained. Then he saw it was a corps side-car and waved them on. It was two in the morning before they found the horselines of the 27th, in a pear orchard about six miles south of Charleroi. The sleepy piquet didn’t know where Colonel Long was, nor the name of the adjutant. One of the new men. He called for the sergeant of the Guard. The N. C. O. came running, buttoning his tunic on the way. ‘ ’e wants Colonel Long, sergeant.’

“ ‘Colonel Long! The colonel ’as been commandin’ of the brigade these six months past, sir. Major Tilbury ’as the regiment now, sir.’ The sergeant took a step closer. ‘Bless my sowl! If it ain’t Captain Fenton! Glad to see you back, sir. We need the old ’ands

and ’eads, as the sayin’ goes, sir. I’ll take you to the C. O.’

“Tripping over tent pegs and bivvy ropes they found the shelter where Tilbury, now lieutenant-colonel, was sleeping. ‘Pardon me, sir,’ said the sergeant, shaking one of Tilbury’s legs. ‘Captain Fenton’s reporting for dooty, sir.’

“Tilbury stirred under his blankets. ‘Fenton? Go away, Leeson. None of your practical jokes at this time of the morning.’ He snuggled down again.

“ ‘It’s no joke, sir. I’m really here. Fenton.’

“The colonel sat up and dismissed the sergeant. ‘Come in, John. Where did you come from? We had no word that you were coming back. In the excitement of this armistice the authority to put you on the strength of the regiment must have been mislaid. Glad to see you here, though. You had better take over B Squadron in the morning. Where’s your kit?’

“ ‘I don’t know.’

“Tilbury, assuming it was lost on the way up gave him some blankets and shared his bivvy with John, who fell asleep the moment he lay down.”

“No wonder. He had gone through plenty in one day. What about his wife?”

“She was fearfully worried. The attendant came back to the hotel with no news, except that he had notified Scotland Yard to be on the lookout for the missing man. They got through on the phone to Fenway House. Perhaps he had found his way back there. No sign of him. Then they tried his clubs. The Cavalry. The Bath. The Royal Automobile. Rane-lagh. Boodles. He hadn’t been at any of them. They spoke to Doctor Guthrie. He could only tell them to be calm. Not to worry. He’d turn up all right. What else could he say? Audrey cried herself to sleep that night. Poor girl. Tearing her heart to pieces while John was doing his Valkyrie ride in the side-car. Old Mrs. Fenton had resigned herself to anything that might happen. Fuzzy had too many official distractions to worry about his boy, who might have slipped off into the gay crowd to have a good time away from two fussy women.

“Next morning John picked up his life as if nothing had ever happened. The quartermaster found some of his kit, which hadn’t been sent after him because of the way he left the regiment. When he awoke, there it was, his former batman laying out an old uniform, well brushed and buttons shining. ‘Good-morning, captain.

I can’t find your Sam Browne belt, sir. Cup of tea, sir?’

“John sent him to find a belt somewhere. You know how a good batman can produce anything you want, given time?”

“Like a magician with a top hat. I lost a good horse, complete with saddle and bridle, in the spring retreat. In three days’ time my man Harriss turned up with a better horse, better saddle and better bridle, and an innocent expression on his face. On close inspection it was evident that the hoof brands had been filed off, but whether the horse did the filing himself or not we didn’t have time to find out.”

“My man offered me a grand piano near Albert, but we didn’t have room for it. Anyway, John’s batman got him a belt and a revolver, in fact everything he needed. No one questioned John about the time he had been away. There was all the business of shining up for a more or less triumphal march to Brussels. Possibly to Berlin. John found a moment to write a note to Audrey. Addressed it to Fenway House where he thought she was. It was forwarded to the disconsolate women sitting in their London hotel. They couldn’t believe their own eyes. It must be a trick of some sort.

Or a practical joke. Yet, the writing was John's. In a good, firm hand. He wrote very simply.

" 'Audrey Darling—

I got back to the regiment yesterday. Lots of changes. Am commanding B Squadron. I must have been away some time but haven't quite figured it out yet. The bay mare is fine. She seemed to know me. There is nothing more for you to worry about now the fighting is over. You'll have to tell me all that happened while I was away. All my love to you, dear, and to mother and father.

'John.

P. S. Please send my Sam Browne belt.'

"Can you imagine what that note did to those distracted females? They read it over. Two or three times. They got on the phone to Fuzzy at the War office. He couldn't believe it. He'd send a wire to Cavalry Corps. Have John sent home at once. The idea of him wandering around France! Audrey, the coolest head of the lot, told him to find out if John was really in France but not to say anything about bringing him home until she had spoken to Doctor Guthrie. Guthrie was firm about not having John brought home. 'He's evidently entirely well,' he reasoned. 'If he weren't, he wouldn't have found his way to the regiment and picked up his former life. If anything goes

wrong out there, they'll take care of him and bring him home safely.' So it was decided that nothing should be done for the moment.

“One thought was uppermost in Audrey’s mind. Was he well? Was he really well? Not temporarily cured like those times before. Would he know them all? His letter was normal enough. Now that there was no war, he might be all right. Really well. Nothing to upset him. What could have affected him so? Some horrible thing in France. The sort of thing men don’t talk about. That was over now. He’d be able to pick up their lives again. They’d start new, she and John. Audrey and John. John and Audrey. Why hadn’t he stayed home, now the fighting was over? Yet she couldn’t ask that he be brought back. He would be terribly hurt if that were done. Through the simple words of the letter she had read his happiness at being with the regiment again. And he wanted to stay with it so badly. ‘Please send my Sam Browne belt.’ She’d have to go down to Fenway House to find it. Perhaps she had better send some of his other things. She’d go down the next day, get his kit together and let his father ship it out to him. She’d play the game. It didn’t occur to Audrey that it was a rather one-sided game.

English women are like that, you know, though people think it is only the men who play for the team.

“But after the. first excitement was over Audrey nearly collapsed. The reaction, after expecting all the worst, to find John well and carrying on with the regiment. It was hours before she could get strength enough to do anything or go anywhere. By the time she reached Fenway Hall, Fuzzy had a message from the Cavalry Corps. Yes, Captain Fenton was with the

27th, commanding B Squadron. No authority for his joining. No warrants issued for his transportation. No medical board to pass on his fitness. Most irregular. Most. Lucky for John, experienced officers were as necessary after the Armistice as before. It's no easy job keeping troops in hand in a foreign country, especially when there is nothing for them to do except a bit of drilling and a lot of brass polishing. So John stayed. Through Belgium and into Germany. Just outside of Cologne where the 27th was holding one of the bridgeheads.

"John settled down in a tidy little schloss that had grounds extending half a mile along the Rhine. Good shooting. Duck on the river. Pheasant, partridge and hare in the woods. The owner was a middle-aged baroness. Tall. Slender. Black hair sprinkled with grey.

Lines of suffering around her eyes. John's only contact with her was to exchange a formal good-morning as she made her daily tour of inspection of the estate, accompanied by a one-legged bailiff who looked as if he had been a Feldwebel. John would watch them going through the stable yards, throwing an envious eye on the sleek, round troop horses. A queer couple. The woman in stiff, black silk that rustled under a fur cape. Three steps behind, the man stumped along in an old feldgrau uniform topped by a Tyrolean hat plumed with an enormous Gamsbart which nodded in rhythm with the tapping of his wooden leg. They coldly resisted any attempt at conversation. John's German was met with precise English monosyllables."

“Did you see much of John? Were you able to observe his condition?”

“Strangely enough, I didn’t see him the first month he was back. It seemed to me that he was avoiding me, so I didn’t press the meeting. I went to Paris for Christmas. There was no leave going at the time, but I managed to get up there on official business.”

“What official business could you possibly have in Paris?”

“Buying oddments for the men’s Christmas dinners,

of course. I called on the provost-marshal in the Rue St. Honore. He was out, so I left a chit telling him the reason for my visit, but he didn’t have time to investigate me with Paris full of English, Australian and Canadian officers who didn’t bother with formalities of any sort. Iris met me the second day. We stopped four days at the Meurice. Shops. Restaurants. Theaters. Then she went on to her aunt who had a villa on the Californie behind Nice.

“On my way back the train reached Cologne after ten at night. I wanted food and drink. The restaurants and bierstuben closed at nine. All the civilians had to be off the street by that time. The only place I thought might be open was the Ewige Lampe, which had been turned into the Officers’ Club. A gunner officer in my compartment suggested the Hollander Hof, a small hotel behind the railway station. Good food. Good drink. Dancing with amusing girls. I went along. The gunner led me to a decent little place and rapped mysteriously at the closed door. The proprietor let us

in and took us upstairs into a sort of parlor from which now came waltz music played on a piano. Some men's voices sent heart}' gusts of laughter through the doorway. The proprietor hurried ahead of us with

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profuse apologies. 'I must quiet the gentlemen officers or the provost-marshal will hear and arrest my place.'

"We went into the room. Five or six of our officers were dancing with German girls while some others sat at little tables eating and drinking. Sitting at the piano playing the 'Destiny Waltz' was my friend John. He didn't see me at first. Playing half in a dream, his eyes were on the ceiling. One of the women said, 'Sehr romantisch, der Herr Rittmeister.' Her friend giggled as she agreed. 'Nicht wahr? Willst du probieren?' John's eyes wandered in my direction. The music stopped abruptly. He came across the room with out-stretched hands. He sat with me while I had food. He looked fine. The man I knew in 1914. He didn't speak of the time that had passed since I shipped him away from our Field Ambulance to be a witness at the Hartman court-martial. Neither did I. We'd get to it sooner or later. Some one else started the piano going. Two lads from the 17th and a couple from the 21 st took it on themselves to render a four part song at the top of their lungs. One of those glees, full of maying and haying. They were so pleased with themselves that nothing would do but an encore. The direct result was.

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a hammering at the street door, and the command to open in forcible English.

“The proprietor turned pale. ‘Mein Gott! Die Polizei! Schnell Madels! Oben!’ The girls dashed up the stairs and disappeared. I heard later that there was a sort of dormitory on the top floor. One long line of beds into which the girls tumbled, clothes and all, covered themselves up and feigned sleep until the police visit was over. We men sat in groups at the tables below, the glee singers now straining their vocal cords with ‘Where My Caravan Has Rested.’ The provost had a ratlike nose and gimlet eyes with an Aidershot manner, but since there was no flagrantus delecti, or in other words, fraternizing with the enemy, he could only caution the proprietor and leave.”

“Speaking of fraternizing with the enemy, George, reminds me of the first time I took my batman into Germany. I was stopping at the Excelsior Hotel in Cologne. You know it? Opposite the Dom? The following morning Harriss turned up a bit heavy-eyed and late. ‘What ho, my lad,’ I said to him, pretending to be annoyed, ‘you’re late. Been out with a woman? Don’t you know it’s against Army orders to fraternize with an enemy woman?’ He looked at me a bit sheepishly.

Then in deadly earnest he explained. ‘I didn’t fraternize with her, sir. I paid her!’ ”

“Well, Chilly, he obeyed the letter if not the spirit of the law. Same as we did in the Hollander Hof. The girls drifted into the room again. Now that the police had come and gone they knew there were hours of safety in which to ply their classic trade. Some of the

men disappeared from the room with girls. John and myself finished the bottle of Liebfraumilch before us with the help of a red-headed girl who made a dead set for John. He wasn't having any. Turned the conversation politely once or twice. The girl tried to sit on his lap, to put her arms around his neck. Good business woman. I could only think of a jeweler's clerk letting a diamond ring sparkle under a bright light to make it more attractive to the prospective customer. The girl found out that John spoke German fluently. John winked at me so I listened to the dialogue that followed.

"I'll give it to you in English. After the lady complimented him several times, she spoke of spending the night together. A Liebesnacht. John winked at me again. 'I'll never spend another night with you,' he said. 'Another night? Why, you never spent any nights with me,' she answered, mentally checking over

her clients. 'Never.' John laughed. 'Do you remember the German artillery officer who spent the night with you last May? The one who had to leave early in the morning to catch a train for the front?'

"She looked at him in amazement. So did I. I knew that last May he had been a sick man in England. But the girl didn't. John had made a shrewd shot in the dark. He knew that in the lives of all light ladies in wartime there were always some officers that had to leave early to catch trains. The girl was staring at him, fascinated. She began to see a resemblance to some

one. She grew angry. Her face crimsoned as she jumped to her feet and stood with both hands on the table. Then came a string of swearwords. Too fast for me to understand entirely. I caught the equivalents of dirty beast, pigdog and so on, along with allusions to the canine maternity of John in particular and all English officers in general. The proprietor rushed up to quiet her. She wouldn't be stilled. He was a spy, a foul spy who had cheated her as well. Before they had gone to bed he had made a great show of putting a fifty mark note in an envelope. When she tore the seal open after his departure, there was only a paltry five mark note. 'A cheat, a cheat!' she shouted, her professional dignity

hurt to the core. The proprietor and a waiter got her out.

"We paid our bill. The proprietor saw us to the door with added respect. As he went, he said to John, 'Good-night, Herr Rittmeister.' There was sadness and resignation in his voice. 'It is no wonder that England won the war. If her spies are clever enough to sleep with our smart women and fool them—well—Good-night?

"We walked down the deserted street towards the Domplatz. Laughing all the way. When we thought of the woman's expression. The look on the proprietor's face. The awed waiter. At the idea of John undermining the Deutscher Reich. Yet there was a certain irony in the thought. John's laughing comment

changed abruptly, a note of uncertainty creeping into his voice.

“ ‘That is the second time since leaving England that some one has mistaken me for a spy. Strangely enough, George, I feel that I have had some connection with a spy, but I can’t remember exactly what it was.’ We came under one of the big street lamps of the square and I could see in his eyes the unasked questions he had controlled with his lips. He wanted to look behind the veil. It wasn’t something one would care to discuss walking through the windy streets of a German river

town long after midnight. I put him off by asking how he was getting back to his quarters. He led me behind the gloomy cathedral to a courtyard where his man waited with a dogcart. ‘Hello, where did this come from?’ I asked. ‘I rent the cart. One of my own horses. We picked up some harness on our way through Belgium. I drive tandem these afternoons if I’m not busy. The grey gelding is developing into a fine leader. Old Juno is a steady wheeler. Get in and I’ll take you to the Field Ambulance. It’s on the way.’ His groom climbed in behind.

We rattled over the cobbled streets, the iron rimmed wheels clattering on the stones. Down towards the river and then to the right in the direction of Bonn. I pulled up my coat collar. It was nippy going against the wind. I looked at John, sitting on the box as erect as if he were driving in the harness class at the Olympia Horse Show. I couldn’t help thinking of the

last time I had seen him behind horses at night. Tied to the rear seat of the gun limber with the mutilated body of Major Boyne in his arms. I welcomed the noise of the cart and horse which echoed back at us from the silent houses. A final shower of sparks from the mare's shoes as she swung around a corner and then on to a dirt road into

the comparative silence of the country. The mare knew the way now that we were clear of the city. John put his whip into the socket as she trotted steadily on towards the warm stall and fragrant hay she knew was waiting down the road.

"He pulled out a cigarette case, offering it to me. I took two gaspers, lighting one for him and placing it between his lips. As he puffed at it the tip glowed under his nose, throwing a faint halo of light around his clean cut face. Not a sign of any illness. Of any upset nerves. Of any hallucinations. This couldn't be the man who saw strange faces peering through the painted canvases of his forebears. I had to tell him how well he seemed. 'You've never looked better, John.' 'Thanks, George, I'm feeling fine.' He peered over his shoulder and saw that his groom was asleep behind him. 'Steady, girl, steady,' he spoke to the mare, pulling gently on the reins to bring her down to a walk at the foot of a slight hill. As she settled into the collar walking smartly, John threw the question at me. The question I had been waiting for without being able to decide if I should tell him the truth or not.

“ ‘What happened to me between the time I left the regiment and came back again?’

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“Rather a tall order, that. I couldn’t possibly tell him all about it, jolting along a dark German country road in a dogcart late in the night. There was too much to say and I was too tired to begin at that hour. Would he have dinner with me the following night and we’d go over the whole thing? Yes, he would. But he’d like to ask just one more question. How long had he been away? As well as he could figure it, a year must have elapsed. He had missed a Christmas, a spring, a summer and the early fall so it must have been a year. We reached the top of the hill and John sent the rested mare off at a trot. The groom awakened and leaned forward to warn John. ‘Beg pardon, sir. Look out for the ditch when you come to the white house. The pioneers didn’t get the road mended. I’d better lead the mare, sir.’

“The white house was just beyond my billet so I got out. The groom went to the horse’s head. John leaned down from the box to say good-night. Smiling. A happy man. Shook my hand warmly. ‘To-morrow we’ll shake up last year’s bird’s nest, eh, George?’ He clucked to the mare and the groom led her away, going back on his heels to keep her from breaking into a run before they came to the ditch.

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“I stood looking after them. Shake up last year’s bird’s nest, would he? Perhaps he’d be better off to leave it alone, I thought, turning into the house. One of

my old Nannie's stories came back to me. She had a mental chamber of horrors. One for every occasion. This was of a little boy in India who went hunting old birds' nests and found a snake asleep among the empty egg shells. The snake bit him when he disturbed it. The moral was obvious. Now there was nothing for me to do but to stand by. If John was bitten I'd have to be quick with an antidote. Sleep overtook me before I could come to a decision. In the morning the problem was sitting on the foot of my bed and distracted me the entire day. I would have preferred being hit in the face with a dead cat to digging into the past year. Somehow or other the hands of the clock flew around to the dinner hour.

"John came. We had a damn good dinner. Our mess cook, rightly named on account of the awful messes he had served us in wartime, had suddenly developed into an astute promoter since our arrival in Germany. The woman of the house we lived in got a part of our rations in return for her supervision of the cooking. Which meant that we supplied her with sugar, flour,

jam and, most valued of all, soap, so that our cook could sit in the kitchen smoking comfortably while the woman did the work. We didn't lose anything by the arrangement. She managed so well. For John we had a good clear soup, some Rhine salmon with a sweet sauce, a brace of wild duck stuffed with onions, a chocolate souffle, finishing with a savory made of fish roe. Some very good wine and excellent brandy that we bought locally completed the meal."

“You did yourselves damn well, that’s all I can say. You’ve made me hungry, too. Got any more ham?”

I left him to pour a drink and went out into the pantry for more food. “Make some coffee,” he called after me, then followed with his drink in hand. “We can talk in here while you’re doing it.”

I laughed. “Don’t worry, Chilly. I won’t hold anything back from you. After dinner I took John to my room. The cheerful wood fire waved us a flaming welcome as we lit our pipes and sat down. Laced with food and good cheer the prospect of our conversation lost its forbidding quality. I wondered why I had been so upset. After all, John was certain to hear from someone

what he wanted to know. How much better it was that he should get the information from me, his old friend, who knew all about it. That’s what old friends are for, I told myself, unconsciously feeling noble and heroic.”

“Good Rhine wine acts that way, George.”

“I found that out. It helped me through the first and most difficult part. From the time in the dugout up to the death of Boyne. John was terribly shocked. Not at his own mental state. That didn’t disturb him. His upset was at the manner of Boyne’s death. At his own insistence that Boyne corroborate his statements about Hartman, as he lay in our ambulance suffering from his amputations. How could he have been so cruel? So heartless? I told him he hadn’t known what he was doing. He could think of nothing at that moment but Hartman, the man who had passed through his life

three times, leaving disaster behind him. I told him of the court-martial. Of the tricks used to convict Hartman. Of what happened in his room as Hartman was being taken to his execution. Of his own condition in the nursing home in London and at Fenway House. He was terribly worried about Audrey. ‘Poor girl! Poor girl!’ He kept repeating the phrase. ‘What

must she think of me? I must have been as helpless as a child. What did mother think? And father? How upset they must have been when I disappeared on Armistice Day and turned up in France!

“ ‘The strange thing, George, is that I can’t tell exactly when I became normal again. I know I was in a public house drinking with strangers, then I came to a railway station and went into a waiting train, which seemed the natural thing to do. Then there was the boat. After that the staff car with young Candlish waiting for me to get in.

“ ‘Sometime shortly after that I realized that I had skipped a long time in my life. Possibly a year. No one said anything to me about it. I was afraid to ask. Afraid to know. After all, one doesn’t go to an acquaintance and say, “Pardon me, would you mind telling me where I’ve been these past twelve months?” Does one? I almost came to you but I felt you were avoiding me. I couldn’t write home to ask. The idea was too silly. All I could do was to let things take their natural course. My only consolation was that the fact of my being in the Army in good standing proved I hadn’t done

anything disgraceful in the interim. But that entire period was a total loss to me. Now that you

have started my mind working, the recollection of some of the happenings will come back. Would you mind telling me the first part again? No, on second thought I'd rather you didn't. I want to go back to my billet and think a bit. It's been awfully good of you, George. You've put up with so much from me. So have those at home. I'll go now. Good-night.' "

Chapter Eleven

"HE HAD TAKEN it very well. Much better than I had any right to expect. One doesn't hear that sort of news easily. Of course, the fact that he didn't become excited was the best sign of his perfect recovery. Late as it was, I was too keyed up to go to sleep. So I wrote a long letter to Doctor Guthrie before I forgot any of it. I made a resume of the whole case, omitting nothing but reference to Hartman. I've often wondered if I should have let Guthrie know about that, though I can't see what difference it would have made to the ultimate outcome. He answered me in a few days. Thanked me for the information. Wrote that this was one of the most interesting cases of his experience. A man who could go from absolute normality to a frenzy of pure insanity and then reverse the process was really a rara avis. He quoted a few instances of lesser cases that hadn't aroused his interest. They hadn't merited the attention that a prima like this demanded. He looked forward to having a long talk with John some day soon and would I call on him when I came to England.

"John didn't turn up for several days. When he did come his mind was fully made up. He wanted to go home. Home to Audrey. He had already put in an application for extended leave. He could do more good at home. He hated leaving the regiment, but everything was going well. Anyone could take his place. He must

go home. Tilbury had been sporting about it. Insisted that he go. Old Long, who commanded the brigade, had forwarded the application to division recommending it for immediate action. Would I tell him again about Boyne in the Field Ambulance and what Clarke said about the time of the court-martial?

"It was then that he began piecing bits together. His reactions to the different events came back to him, up to the time of Hartman's execution. You see, he could recapture the high spots. It was fascinating to listen to him open his mind. The violent moments had carved themselves into his subconscious. The period following the end of Hartman had been one of peace and quiet. Nothing happened then to scratch his mental seismograph. He wanted to have my opinion from a medical standpoint. Would any of these attacks recur? Would it be safe to have children? What he wanted was so simple. Just to be a normal English husband

with a house in the country—and kids! He went back to the night he had spent with Audrey the first time he had come home. His shame, his humiliation, were raw spots on his soul. Could she forget what had happened? Would she let him try to make up for it?

"I made the best answers I could to all of his questions. I pointed out that to all intents and purposes, their status was the same as on their wedding day. He hadn't changed. Audrey hadn't changed. They could start again as if nothing had ever happened. They should go away somewhere. A complete change of scene for a honeymoon with nothing to bring back

recollections of the past. The attacks would in all probability never recur. Now that the war was over and Hartman actually dead, there was nothing to set him off again.

"He thought it over carefully before speaking. 'Yes, one can safely say that Hartman is dead. My sword thrust might not have killed him that first time. He may not have died in the trench after the raid. But I don't think a British firing squad could miss. Do you, George?' Rather pathetic the way he hung on the question. The answer meant so much to him. If Hartman was finally out of the way, nothing could interfere with their happiness. I told him to stop worrying now.

To forget the whole business. Audrey would be so happy to have him with her again. What I couldn't tell him was that Iris had written to me about Audrey. That she was still pretty, but withering a little. Like a rose that had had its heart eaten out by a garden insect, leaving the color and the petals prettily folded as before. Poor Audrey, wasting away for want of love. Perhaps his coming back would revive her.

"He wanted me to have dinner with him that night, so we sent his groom back with the horses. We walked the few miles. I needed the exercise. Sitting at a desk all day gets one down. Going along the pleasant road with the afternoon sun warming our backs, it didn't seem as if anyone in the world could have a care or sorrow. A few days of warm weather had invited some adventurous buds to peep out of the tree branches. The

poultry in the farmyards we passed clucked over the prospects of the approaching evening meal. Made one feel poetic. I tried to think of some lines from one of the English poets. I was never very good at remembering appropriate verse. I could only think of Grey's 'Elegy.'

" 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea. .

and so on. That seemed too gloomy. Didn't fit the occasion.

John quoted Heinrich Heine to me, one of his later poems—'In dem Walde spriesst und grunt es.' Do you know it? It goes

" 'Now the woods bloom like a maiden
Going to a lover's meeting;
And the sun smiles down upon it
"Welcome spring! A happy greeting!"

" 'Nightingale, I hear your flute notes
And they start the woods a-ringing.
What a poignant, long-drawn measure…
"Love"—'Tis all you know of singing!'"

Chilton grunted. "Very pretty, George. You two men didn't forget to weave a daisy chain as you skipped from couplet to couplet, for the honor of the British

Empire? Or did you? Or go in for a bit of Morris dancing on the village green?"

"To be truthful, Chilly, what we were doing wasn't a bit odd. After all, that day had its mood. So many days do. Even for cynics. It was good to be alive. To swing good arms and strong legs. So many poor devils we knew would never be able to do that again. No liquor ever gives the exhilaration that comes from the well-being of a moving body. The ancient Greeks knew that."

"The ancient Greeks knew a lot of things that aren't good for general consumption. After you'd danced around the Maypole, what then?"

"We got to the 27th mess and had a drink. Tilbury came in. 'Come to speed the parting guest?' he asked me. 'John is going to-morrow.' So it was settled. John would go to-morrow! The look on John's face as he heard the news was like that of a child seeing his first Christmas tree. He wasn't aware of the laughing, drinking officers in the mess. In spirit he was already at home. Tilbury touched me on the arm, nodding in the direction of John who stood dreaming before the fireplace.

" 'Good lad,' said the understanding Tilbury. 'Wish we were all going with him.' We went in to dinner, leaving John to himself. He never heard us leave the room. About five minutes later, as we were starting the fish, he came in, ruddy faced with embarrassment and full of apologies. Of course every one at the table ragged him. The 27th always had a jolly crowd, peace

or war time. We made a night of it. Music. Cards. Drink. At five the next morning we all turned out on the road to say good-bye to him. He was taking the early train from Cologne. His groom was there with

the dogcart, the same one that brought us from Cologne a few weeks before. Someone started singing, ‘For he’s a jolly good fellow.’ They all took it up. No one could deny it. He shook hands all around. I stood near the dogcart, envying him.

“ ‘I’ll drive you to your billet, George. Hop in? I hopped in and we drove off with the noisy good wishes fading from us. John was affected by the send-off. ‘I’ll miss all those silly blighters,’ he said, cracking the driving whip to stir up the sleepy horse. ‘Steady—whoa, there! Steady! I’ve been thinking over what you said, George. About going back to the old house and all that. You’re right, old man. Right as usual. I’ll telegraph to Audrey from Cologne to meet me in Boulogne. I’ll pick her up there and we’ll take the express to Paris and go on to Switzerland. Neither of us have been there for years. Father took me to Murren over a Christmas when I was at Sandhurst. Audrey went to school for awhile in Lausanne. The climate was good for her mother. We’ll have a jolly time. Ski-ing, tobogganing and skating. I think we’ll go on to St. Mortiz. What do you think?’

“I thought it a great idea. He’d be able to forget war and soldiering in a country that had been disinterested,

as far as the fighting was concerned. Switzerland was ideal. Sports. Good hotels. Cheery company. What could be better? He was glad I approved of it. Audrey would love it, too. ‘She likes cold weather and snow,’ he announced with the gravity befitting a royal proclamation. I laughed. ‘She’ll love being with you, John.’ He blushed right up into his capband as he brought the cart to a stop. We were in front of my billet. ‘Good-bye, George. I can’t begin to thank you. You’ve been my friend for so long. Don’t ever stop being my friend! I’ll write you how everything goes. Good luck!’

“ ‘Good luck!’ The cart moved away. John, shoulders squared, swaying easily on the box. I watched them roll around the turning of the road, John giving me the coachman’s salute with the whip before the trees shut them from sight. There was happiness drawn in every line of his body. That easy solidity of healthy satisfaction in living that comes when everything is going well. He was on his way again to a great adventure. The greatest adventure. No drums or trumpets or flags or uniforms, this time. No clanking of swords or rumbling of artillery wheels. No beat of marching feet He was going alone to meet life, with head up

and arms outstretched. It was like the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, the difference being that they knew certain death was waiting in the valley. John didn’t know that, you see.”

“What do you mean? Oh—look out! The coffee’s boiling over, George! Take it off the flame, will you? These chairs in here are too damned uncomfortable. I’ll take the cups into the other room. Want to hear this through!”

I followed him, coffee pot in hand.

“Didn’t he get to Paris with his wife?”

“Oh, yes. He got to Paris well enough. He wrote to me from there a week later. His letter fairly crackled with delight. Audrey had been hours waiting for him at Boulogne as he got off the Cologne express. You know how irregularly that ran. For troops only. Do you remember it?”

“Do I ? A rattling sardine tin crammed with soldiers! If one stood up for a second to stretch a leg, an oily second lieutenant would pop in one’s place. Nature called me out of the compartment one trip as we left Liege. When I came back there was a one-pipper pretending to sleep in my seat. Will you believe it, George, I had to stand in the corridor, or sit out there on someone’s

kit all the way to Brussels? Five hours, at the rate we traveled then, before the blackguard had to quit my place for the same reason as I did.”

“Funny how we can look back with humor—even affection—at those annoying little incidents that were such important factors in our daily lives!

“John had been on pins and needles the two nights he spent on the train. They stopped for five hours outside of Namur. No one was allowed to leave the

train. It rained incessantly. It was like huddling in a Nissen hut without a fire. By the time they reached Amiens, John was ready to get off and walk.

"But at Boulogne, there was Audrey casting a radiant glow over the railway platform. At least, it seemed that way to John when he saw her waiting there in yellow tweeds with a great pale lynx collar falling away from her throat. She was in his arms instantly. British reticence or not, there she was. The crowd of officers and Tommies streamed by, hastening towards the steamer for England, jostling these two lovers who stood like pilings in a river as the ebb tide hurries to the sea. No one noticed them. The thoughts of the other passengers were jumping ahead of them. Across the Channel to the people who meant home to them.

The platform emptied rapidly. John said that he and Audrey might have stood there for hours if half a dozen French kids hadn't started begging pennies. John emptied the coins from his pocket into the air. The children started a free-for-all fight to get the money as he and Audrey ran across at top speed for the Paris train. It was tooting its departure as they climbed aboard. They tumbled into a compartment. Laughing school children on a holiday. John suddenly jumped up. He'd forgotten the tickets. Audrey had bought them. But her luggage? Audrey had seen to its being put on the train. Nothing to worry about. They sat down laughing again. Audrey wrote to Iris a few days later. After telling what she had seen in the shops and

theaters, there were two short, significant lines. ‘You’ll want to know about John. He is perfect. I never knew that I should live to be so happy.’ ”

“That seems conclusive, doesn’t it? Damn it all, they deserved a bit of happiness. What then?”

“What do you suppose?”

“Well—er—I know what usually happens to happily mated people when they are in Paris on a honeymoon. But you inferred that something—something different —I don’t know what—took place.”

“It did. Not then. Later. John’s letter from Paris was the happiest I ever read. So happy that it made me sad. I knew that no one could be so happy for long. It isn’t in the cards. You know that is true, old man. Yet one can’t go about croaking like a raven, warning lovers with doleful axioms. ‘Love while ye may—life is short and love is fleeting.’ Imagine, when you were young and in love, what you would say to someone who inferred that youth and happiness weren’t eternal! At least as far as you were personally concerned. Yet there was a note in John’s letter which made me feel that the marriage would last, even after the icing was off the cake. Wait a moment. I have that letter, along with a later one from Switzerland, in my desk here. I saved it because of the simple truth he wrote.”

I found it in a moment, locked up in a little iron box I used for papers I want to keep safely. It was on the stationery of the Hotel Trianon at Versailles.

“ ‘Dear George—

“ ‘We are spending a few days here. Charming spot, once away from the diplomats who clutter up the restaurants, guzzling enormous quantities of champagne and caviar to give them the strength to make our world safe for democracy, whatever that

means. We did the palace on our first day. What an uncomfortable place it must have been to live in! And what an uncomfortable age, when stripped of the veils that time shrouds forgotten yesterdays with. We are having a bit of early spring. Heavenly weather for us to be in the woods and gardens of the palace every second. We took lunch along with us the last two days. Sitting in the woods with bright rays of sun falling on the spring flowers that spangle the grass. Idyllic is the word, nothing else. Yesterday we pretended that Audrey was a wood nymph and I a satyr. We were rather carried away with the game. Indiscreet. Luckily, no one saw us. The park keepers all buzz around the palace for possible tips.

“ ‘Need I tell you how happy we are? How happy I am ? We love each other, of course. That is without question, George. But what is more important, we like each other. Remember, we have been married for more than five years without really knowing each other. I’ve loved Audrey ever since we were kids. Loving is one thing. Liking is another. You have to know a person, know them well to like them. And the only way to know a person is to be with them from the time they start taking their clothes off at night until they are fully dressed the next day. Don’t misunderstand, you old scoundrel. I mean it’s the things a person

who is with you does in intimate daily life that makes you like or dislike them. The way they look into your eyes and smile. If they let cigarette ends burn the furniture. If they sing in

the bath. Do I make it clear ? All silly things taken separately, but the sum total of daily repetition is staggering. We like each other. We love each other. We are happy. With the sort of happiness that lasts.

" 'Audrey joins me in sending all love to Iris and yourself.

'Yours,

'John.

P. S. I hate to put the words on paper, but I know how anxious you are for good news of me. The old horror, the old fear, is gone forever. Tomorrow we will be in Switzerland.

" 'J.' "

Chapter Twelve

"SWITZERLAND. How we rush to meet our fate! I never realized that when I read the letter the first time, Chilly."

"Fate? Why, man, if he had as good a time in Switzerland as he had in Versailles, there couldn't be much cause for complaint! Indiscreet in the woods of the Trianon, eh? That reminds me of the year I left Leipzig. I was going to do six months in a clinic in Vienna but came to Paris for the Easter holiday. An uncle had left me five hundred pounds. With the inheritance had come the feeling that I was a millionaire. Ready for wine, women and all that sort of thing. Paris in spring. Chestnut trees blooming in the Bois. Gold pieces jingling in the pocket. There was a little girl. Yvette Something-or-other.

"We went to Versailles by carriage. I hired one for the day. We stopped in the forest on the way there. So cool away from the hot, dusty road. She had damn pretty legs. At Versailles after lunch we wandered into the woods behind the little farm of Marie Antoinette

at the Petite Trianon. On the way back to Paris in the early evening we couldn't resist the perfume from a clump of lilacs in the Bois. Early lilacs. Oh, dear! I was young then, and romantic. But young, like Fenton. What part of Switzerland did they go to?"

"St. Moritz. In the Engadine. Beautiful spot. Up in the snow. They wanted the sports, though the season

was almost over. When they got there it was decided not to stay at one of the big hotels. One of the smaller places up in the mountains called Kranzberg. The snow was better, though the guides reported lots of big crevasses due to the early warm spell. They found an inn. A great modern building, three stories high. All heavy logs and lots of woodcarving. You know the kind. Stags' heads, braces of hares, clusters of fruit, all carved by the peasants. There must have been twenty guests there, with a dozen more coming or going in the annex, which was just a sort of dormitory for transients. A long line of bunks along the wall. Everyone ate in the big dining room. A cheery crowd with enormous appetites and a great capacity for drink. Tremendous feather beds. Good servants. Everything plain but comfortable.

"Audrey and John got a bedroom and sitting-room

on the top floor, a little balcony outside, and a marvelous view of the entire valley. They didn't go out of their rooms the first few days. Had their meals served to them. They had shared the last five years with other people. Now they wanted to be alone. When they finally did go into the public rooms, they were only dimly aware of the many guests. A cosmopolitan crowd. Some Americans, come to rest after war work. Argentinians, training for the bobsled races. A family of Spaniards, the father from the Red Cross Commission in Geneva. A wealthy Greek, waiting to get a gambling concession in Lucerne. Two or three elderly Germans whose business was unknown.

Evidently in the secret service. Outside of these Germans and the Spanish father, the guests were young, strong people. The sort that could ski all day and dance all night. Audrey met most of them later.

"In the mornings almost everyone went off on skis, taking their lunches along. The inn would be quiet until four. Tea time found groups before the roaring fire in the lounge. The music would play, an orchestra of four pieces. Audrey wrote it all in her letters to Iris. Women are so good at giving details of the places they visit and the people they meet. It sounded charming.

Iris was all for going to join them. I couldn't get away from the Ambulance, then. I wish to God I had been able to go. Things might have been different had I been there. But it all happened so suddenly. When I got to Switzerland it was too late to do anything.

"John and Audrey decided that it was time they got out for some ski-ing. They made great preparations. Greasing their skis and straps. Ordering the lunch. John had to have some special things. Pate de foie gras, truffles. Astrakhan caviar. A noble pie of ham, chicken, Brussels sprouts and hard-boiled eggs that the inn prided itself on. A bottle of Haute Barsac."

"Splendid, George! I always fed truffles when I took a girl on a little picnic. The food of Aphrodite, you know."

"Chilly, you old satyr!

"John conferred with the manager of the inn the night before. About the best way to go. The condition of the snow. Where to find a good place to stop for

lunch. He made a map of the intended trip. Like a military sketch, with all the conventional signs indicating the landmarks. They made an early start the next morning. Bright sun. Very little wind. Up the gentle slope to where the grades became steeper. They

had been fairly proficient with the skis but were out of practice, naturally. They went down some of the smaller hills until the old knack of handling themselves came back. Then they tried the steeper ones, sweeping along the crusty surface in a downward flight like seagulls dropping to meet the ocean. There were several rough spots. Small crevasses that took a bit of skill to jump, notwithstanding the help of long, swift slides.

"At noon they found the sheltered spot for lunch. No wind. No drifting snow. The sun poured into the depression of the hill with so much warmth that they were able to discard their woolly caps and outer sweaters. In every direction the neighboring summits blinded their eyes with the brilliance of the white snow. Imagine the scene. Young lovers with heads and throats bare in dazzling light. Lunching on food fit for a king. The bottle of wine chilled by dropping in the snow beside them. On a mountain top with life and the world at their feet.

"They went further into the hills. Audrey thought they should turn back but John was drunk with this new found freedom. He wanted to go on and on, hand in hand with Audrey. They sang together, two flying figures throwing joyous notes into the blue skies.

Audrey stumbled going up a steep slope and fell. Like a flash John had her in his arms. Was she hurt? He held her to him, kissing her. Laughingly she broke away and started back the way they had come, following their own tracks which looked as if a giant, two-toed bird had climbed the hill.

“Audrey cut clear, sharp parallels with her skis, only swerving as she glanced back over her shoulder at John. She had never been on such a long slide nor traveled so fast. John’s weight gave him the advantage. His speed increased and at the bottom he caught her again. Their skis tangled. Over and over they rolled, sending the snow flying in clouds like two children playing in a broken feather bed. They laughed so hard that Audrey was ready to cry from exhaustion. When they got back to the inn they had tea in the lounge and then went for a nap before dinner. When they awoke it was morning. They were still tired but awfully happy.

“That was the beginning of a j oily week. They grew more ambitious each day. Steeper slopes. Longer trips. Bigger jumps. The days grew warmer and the cracks in the snow wider and deeper, but that didn’t bother them. They felt that they were expert ski-ers now. Some of the guests were leaving. The Spanish

family and the elderly Germans who weren’t up to the long trips to the good ski runs.

“John and Audrey planned to leave in a fortnight’s time, directly after the ice carnival that was advertised on the notice board in the lounge. Fancy skaters, ski-

ers and bobsled teams were coming from France, Germany and Italy. It would be very gay. After that, John thought of a fortnight at Monte Carlo, while Audrey suggested that they cross the Mediterranean to Algiers and Morocco, then home by way of Gibraltar, Barcelona, Madrid and Biarritz. A perfect plan. They had plenty of money and no need of hastening back to England.

"Audrey got skates and practiced some of the fancy twists and rolls. John had some practice runs on a bobsled with two Americans and the wealthy Greek. It was decided that they would enter a team. Audrey coaxed him to do it. She felt that he had been alone with her long enough. He must mix with other people in the normal way. She had a good, practical mind. They couldn't spend the rest of their lives holding hands and gazing at the moon, no matter how much they loved each other. Doctor Guthrie had warned her against allowing any one thing to occupy John's mind.

Not even herself. Concentration on a single thought tends to introspection, he said. That would be the worst possible condition for John. So far, Doctor Guthrie had been right. John was strong and healthy, tanned by the wind and sun. He laughed heartily. Ate well. Slept well. And no doubt he was an ardent lover.

"Two days before the carnival, John's team smashed their bobsled going around the treacherous Koenigspitz turn. A double hair-pin curve that had wrecked the hopes of many bobsled teams. None were hurt in the spill but it would take a lot of work to get

the sled repaired in time for the carnival. The eisstadion was being scraped and flooded to get a mirror surface for the skating events. There was nothing to do but skiing. Off they went, a little later than the usual time. The day-light was longer every day, now, and they knew the country well so it didn't matter how far they went. After lunch in their favorite spot they went on.

"About three o'clock the skies suddenly clouded and the wind came up. You know how quickly a storm can develop in the mountains. The snow drifted in unpleasant gusts. Audrey was all for turning back. John

laughed at her fears. She insisted, so they started home. Bending far forward to keep their balance against the strong wind that would send them upright with each sudden puff. The down hill was hard enough work but going up hill was terrific. Slipping and sliding on the places where the wind had blown the snow clear of the ice. They stopped to rest on the hill top before going down a long, twisting grade, the upper part sheltered from the storm. They were dripping wet with perspiration from their struggles. When they breathed easily again, they ventured the slope. It was like dropping into space to go from the comparative calm of the summit into the snow clouds that whirled about the lower valley, obscuring all outlines.

"John was in the lead, Audrey following in his tracks. The wind was behind them now, driving these two in a speeding tandem. They made the first turn at the bottom. A long, majestic curve to the left, then a sudden sharp swing to the right with a jump over a crevasse. They had made it so often that they knew it as well as the lanes around Fenway House. Audrey explained this all to me. John had looked back to see if she were following and misjudged the take-off for the jump. The toe of one ski caught on a rough spot

and he stumbled. As she sailed over the crevasse she saw John tumble into the crack, arms and legs spread in every direction.

"A sickening feeling came over her. Resisting an impulse to faint, she checked as quickly as she could

and hurried back to the crevasse, rubbing snow on her face to keep herself from swooning. ‘John! John!’ she called. There was no answer. Shaking with fear, not for herself but for John, she pulled her skis off and crawled to the brink. There, about thirty feet down, was John, sprawled on an icy ledge, his right leg bent under him, the snow slowly turning red with his blood. What could she do? There was no way of climbing down the sheer sides. Should she jump? If she did, she might get hurt and be of no use to him. Should she stay and watch over him? He might bleed to death while she sat there, helpless. Unless coagulation set in from the cold. That often stopped bleeding, she remembered. But he might freeze to death. She called to him until her voice began to crack. Clearly, there was only one thing to do. To go to the inn for help. If she could only make it safely and get back in time!

“Her fingers shook so badly that it seemed as if her

skis would never get on her feet again. Before starting she scribbled a note.

“ ‘John—I’ve gone for help. A.’ She filled one of her gloves with snow and put the note inside, so the wind wouldn’t blow it away and dropped it down beside him. As it landed, she turned to make her way back. It had been difficult enough following John. He had broken the rough going and deflected some of the storm from her. Now she had to face it alone.”

“How did she ever find the way back?”

“I told you she had a practical mind. Besides, she was blessed with what is withheld from most women.

A sense of direction. She had studied John's sketches and carried a pocket compass, the same as he did. Most of the landmarks were obliterated. She lost her way twice. It was eight o'clock before she fell through the doorway of the inn, causing no end of excitement. The guests were going in to dinner. Everyone swarmed around as she tried to keep herself in hand, stammering out her explanation to the manager. Some women tried to get her to go to bed. The searching party would get ready immediately. They would surely find him. She must rest. Audrey wouldn't hear of it. She'd lead them back. Anything else would be out of the question. They

got her to take some brandy. Then a bowl of steaming soup while the others got out of dinner clothes and into their ski-ing woollens. Would they never get ready? The hot soup made the brandy go to her head. She saw so many strange, new faces peering at her. Was she dreaming?

"It was really the competitors who had arrived that afternoon for the carnival. Someone pulled a pair of mittens on her hands. Others drew her to her feet. Voices around her in various accents were saying, 'We're ready. Where is she? Vorwarts! Avanti! Allez-vous-en!' Her tired feet stumbled through the open doorway from the hot, well lighted room into the cold, black night. The nippy air made her feel better. Sharpened her wits. Around her, torches made of pine knots were being lit by the men of the searching party,

throwing weirdly smoking tongues of flame upwards as the group started forward.

"Monsieur Godin, the inn's sport instructor, a wiry Helvetian, buckled on her skis. 'Venez vite, s'il vous plait, chere madame.' Like an automaton she found herself gliding rhythmically over the runners. The wind was diminishing, a lucky thing. Audrey moved along the column. At the rear were two toboggans

loaded with shovels, picks and ropes. In front of them were men carrying first aid kits, brandy flasks, extra torches. It was rather thrilling, Audrey thought. She would have enjoyed the adventure if John weren't the objective. Funny how detached a person's mind can be in a moment of stress. She got to the head of the procession. There must have been twenty people in it, winding in single file over the hills like a fire-throwing dragon as the torches hissed and spat out the burning pitch. She told me after that she would never forget the sight. Not if she lived a hundred years. I was sure of that. She painted such a vivid picture of it to me. Monsieur Godin was at her side. She didn't recognize any of the others.

"The trip back to the inn had taken her almost four hours to make. I think I told you that she had lost her way several times as well as having to buck the snow and wind. It only took an hour for the party to find the crevasse. While the others unloaded the toboggans to prepare for putting down a rope ladder, Audrey took one of the pine torches that had been stuck into the

snow and crawled to the brink. There on the ledge lay John, her glove just where she had dropped it."

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"Was he dead? Had the fall killed him? Did she faint?"

"One question at a time, Chilly. He wasn't dead. The fall hadn't killed him. She didn't faint. He looked as if dead. Audrey screamed. Quite involuntarily. 'John! My John!' He stirred a little, she thought. Or was it the smoky shadow from the pine torch that deceived her? Her cry brought some of the men to where she was lying. 'Is he alive?' The question everyone asked. She told them that she thought she saw him move. By now stakes had been driven into the ice and ropes made fast. Some one brought a rope ladder, one of those with wooden rungs like they use on ships. As it was lowered into the crevasse, Audrey took hold of it to climb down. Monsieur Godin stopped her. Too dangerous. Not much room below. While she was protesting a young man took the rope from her hand.

"One of the American women who came with the party tried to distract Audrey by engaging her in conversation. Audrey saw the man descending the ladder. 'Who is he?' she asked. The American woman, glad to talk, told her that he had come with one of the sports teams. So many had arrived that day. She didn't know

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his name but had heard that he was a geologist and a great mountain climber. A German. Much too good

looking for a man who was devoting his life to studying rocks.

"Audrey broke away from the chatter to see what was going on down below. The man was on the ledge, electric flash light in hand. He kneeled down and listened to John's heart. To Audrey it seemed as if he would never lift his head from John's chest. Suddenly he raised up and straightened the leg which was bent under John. As he did so, John groaned and the man looked up and shouted what Audrey had known the instant he reached for John's leg. 'He lives! He lives!' The words came up with a queer echo from the cavern. Monsieur Godin called down to ask if he needed help. 'No,' he answered. 'Not until I fix the leg. Too soft down here. Too much weight will crumble this shelf.' Audrey wondered if he were an Englishman, the way the clipped, precise words came up to them.

"Taking some collapsible iron rods laced with tapes from his haversack, he made a rough, practical splint for the leg. His experienced hands moved swiftly. He called for a rope with a soft sling. While those above got it ready, he took John in his arms and unscrewed

the top of a brandy flask. Audrey in her excitement almost slipped over the edge. Some one caught her. She didn't know who. She didn't care. John was alive! He'd soon be back in their cozy room at the inn, laughing at the accident. If his leg was broken, as it seemed to be, there were lots of good doctors in Switzerland, she told herself. Everyone broke an arm

or a leg skiing or bobsledding. After his leg was set they'd give a big party for the rescuers.

"A scream from below broke in on her happy thoughts. A scream from John, who had opened his eyes after a swallow of the spirits. To her great horror, she saw him seize his rescuer by the throat and try to strangle him, shouting madly all the while. Monsieur Godin and another man hurried to the ladder. Fascinated, Audrey watched the struggling going on below. She called to John at the top of her voice, but in her fright only whispered sounds came from her lips. The snow crunched so loudly, she thought, as they rolled on the narrow ledge. Two strong men fighting for life.

"John dragged the other fellow so close to the rim that Audrey thought they would both crash down into the lower chasm. Only the other man's presence of mind saved them. He hooked one foot through the

rung of the rope ladder and tried hard to tear himself loose from John. Even though John had lost the grip on this man's throat at the outset, both John's arms were locked around the other's neck. Everyone watching from above was on tenter hooks. They had been warned that the ledge was soft. That too much weight might crumble the shelf. Would it hold, if Monsieur Godin and his helper put their weight on it?

"You understand that all this happened much quicker than I can tell it. Suddenly the man hit John. A sharp right hook that landed on the point of the jaw.

John collapsed like a punctured tire. Audrey heard a voice say, ‘Good! A knockout! Bravo, Hartman!’”

Chilton sprang from his chair.

“Hartman? My God, George! You don’t mean it! Hartman was killed by the firing squad! You told me so yourself!”

Chilton was terribly agitated. He kept saying, “It can’t be true! It can’t be true!” Suddenly he turned on me as if I had been deceiving him.

“Who told you the man was Hartman?”

He snapped the question at me as they do in the criminal courts when they want the person on trial to make a damaging admission.

“Who told you?”

“Audrey told me. The manager of the inn told me. John told me.”

Chilton dropped back in the chair, explosively repeating my words.

“John told you? Why, he must have been mad!”

“He was when they got to him. Hopelessly mad on the one subject. Hartman! He could speak of nothing else. It wasn’t an easy matter to get the story from him. He’d be fuddled in his mind one minute and bright the next. His brain was like an oscillating vibratory machine. I questioned him carefully, particularly as to what happened on the ledge, because he had been normal up to that time. I won’t try to tell it just the way John did. Too jumbled. Here is what I made of it.

“He remembered looking over his shoulder to see if Audrey were following, when he stumbled and fell.

His hands hit soft snow. He clutched at the rim of the cavern that suddenly appeared before him. It crumbled like chalk in his hands. He shot over the side into what seemed a bottomless pit. His leg crashed against some hard surface. Everything went blank. It seemed as if Audrey were calling to him from far away but he had no power to answer. Perhaps he regained consciousness

once or twice. He had called to Audrey but the only answer was from the wind and snow whistling about him. There had been no feeling of getting cold as he lay there. Just a numbness, except for a stabbing pain in the leg when he tried to move. Everything went black again, even the white snow. It was all part of a terrible dream. He'd wake up soon to find himself in the warm bed next to Audrey. There she was, peeping at him over the top of a great, white pillow. Waving a torch in her hand as she called out to him. She was floating on the pillow up near the ceiling, he said. He tried to stop her now, to keep her from falling off the pillow, but every time he did his leg hurt so.

"Some pungent liquid poured into his mouth. It made him gasp and cough. His eyes opened, blinking in the rays from an electric torch. In the ring of light he saw a hand holding the flask, with a gold ring shining on the little finger. A gold signet ring, bearing the crest of a unicorn's head arising from a coronet! John hit out in a panic of fear, trying to push the light away. It fell on the face of the man who held the flask. The face of Hartman!

“John seized both my hands and shook me as he told me that. The face of Hartman smiled at him with its

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blue eyes. It had the same blond hair. The same mustache. The same white teeth. There was only one thing to do. To kill him. To strangle him until he was dead. John seized him, shouting, ‘God damn you, Hartman! I’ve got you now!’ Hartman looked so frightened as he struggled to get free. Something crashed against John’s jaw. The blankness came on him again.”

“My word! No wonder the poor devil went out of his head. What did Audrey do about it?” “I’m coming to that. Audrey was shocked at what she saw. She didn’t know whether to be furious with the man for knocking him out or to be relieved at the end of the struggle. She tried to say something about it to the person next to her. It was the wealthy Greek who was in John’s bobsled team. He reassured her. It was nothing, he said. They often do it. The persons who get hurt or lost in the mountains. Like a drowning swimmer who attacks the rescuer. It is nothing. He shrugged his shoulders, dismissing the matter. Audrey was relieved to know that John hadn’t done anything odd. You know the English horror of unusual, hysterical behavior.

“She looked below again. Monsieur Godin, on the

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lower rung of the ladder, was trying to avoid having his fingers trod on by the anxious helper above him.

They had been ordered to stay on the ladder to keep their weight off the ledge. Audrey watched the man put the sling under John's armpits and then order those above to hoist him up. The two men on the ladder kept John from hitting the icy side of the crevasse. Audrey dropped on her knees beside him as they stretched John out on a blanket. Wiped his face with her handkerchief. As she listened to his heart-beats she caught bits of sentences in German as the group around her discussed what had happened. 'Wahnsinnig. Ein verriickter Mensch,' some one said. They thought John was crazy, did they? They'd be crazy too, if they'd been left alone in the middle of the mountains for hours. Poor John. Monsieur Godin touched her lightly on the shoulder, to explain that they wanted to put John on one of the toboggans. To get him back to the inn as quickly as possible. There would be a good surgeon there by the time they got back. A good surgeon. One was always needed in attendance at an ice carnival, he naively told her.

"The party started back. All strain and tension gone. Some Italians sang a gay song of the mountains. The

Swiss took up the endless verses and ringing choruses as they toiled up the slope. John, well wrapped in blankets, was drawn on a toboggan, Audrey ski-ing alongside. She thought his eyes were open several times but when she leaned over to make sure, they were tightly shut.

"The manager at the inn greeted them with sympathetic platitudes, but hadn't forgotten the

practical side of hotel keeping. There were warm blankets before the fire in John's room, ready for his bed. A hot supper in the kitchen waiting for the others. The doctor was waiting, too. A girthy gentleman with a fan-like beard. Doctor Dubois of Lucerne. Specialized in fractures. Audrey stayed in the room while he examined John. Nothing very serious, he said finally. Two flesh wounds in the right calf. A couple of stitches would take care of that. A badly sprained ankle, more painful than a fracture, should be better in a week or two. A few bruises on the head, shoulders and hips.

" 'Your husband is very lucky, madame. Last year I had to amputate the leg of a man who had a similar accident. It was two days before they found him. Now your husband must rest. Rest and quiet for a few days. I will give him something to keep him sleeping until the morning. Ce n'est pas grave. Ce n'est rien!' She

felt that the doctor was hiding his disappointment at having such an easy case at an ice carnival. The manager knocked discreetly at the door. Could he beg madame to come for some supper? Or should he send a tray? Madame must eat something. She must be hungry after her efforts. Superhuman. Magnifique! His eyes rolled upwards as he praised her.

"Doctor Dubois thought it best that she eat in the dining room. He had work to do with the captain's leg, and would the manager send the under-porter, Gustave, who always acted as a nurse for him? The manager escorted Audrey to the dining room and saw that she

was served. She had nearly finished when she saw the manager and the doctor having a serious confab in the hall. They waited as she came out. To keep from disturbing the captain, would she mind sleeping in another room? It would be better so. The manager had asked the gentleman who had the room next to theirs to give it up to her. The Herr Baron, a most charming young man whom madame may have noticed in the rescue party, had been only too happy to oblige her and had already moved over to the annex.

"Audrey looked from one man to the other. A sprain and a few cuts were nothing to make a fuss over. Was

something seriously wrong with John? Something they were keeping from her? They both smiled at her paternally. Before she could speak the doctor anticipated her question. 'Worry about nothing, madame. To bed now for a good rest! That is the doctor's order. Breakfast in bed. Then a long rest in the morning. A short visit to your husband. After that, some diversion for yourself. We cannot afford to have you for an invalid as well as your husband. Bon soir, madame.' "

Chapter Thirteen

"SLY DOGS, those chaps. Eh, George? This fellow must have told the manager and the doctor enough to make them suspicious. Do you think they believed John insane and wanted to protect Mrs. Fenton?"

"Scarcely a doubt of it, old man. Doctor Dubois wanted to study John without Audrey's knowledge. She felt something mysterious in the air but the doctor's beard impressed her and she was too tired to argue with these pleasant men. She slept late, then dressed and hurried in to see John. He was sleeping. Tossing and murmuring unintelligible words, a drawn look on his face. Audrey tried to remember where she had seen that look before. It was the same expression he had on his face when he came home from France that first time. She sat by the bedside wondering what lay before them. Her married life hadn't been so awfully happy, you know. She was scarcely eighteen when they married in 1914. Five virginal years. They had spent these few heavenly weeks together and now it looked

as if he were going to be that strange man again who had cried himself to sleep in her arms the first night they spent together.

"John awoke with a start, throwing off the hand Audrey had rested on his forehead. Then he saw who it was. He gave a sigh of relief. 'Oh, my dear! I have just had the most terrible dream. My head is rocking from

it yet. What a nightmare! I can't tell you how terrible it was. It seemed so real. Every detail of it. See the way my hands are trembling. Oh, I am glad it isn't true. My leg hurts like the devil!'

"Poor wretch. That was the tragedy of it. He thought it wasn't true. He tried to laugh it off. Perhaps they were eating too rich food. That made for nightmares, Audrey said. They ought to have a change. What about starting off for Monte Carlo? He'd be able to travel in a day or so. They could rent a motor car so that he wouldn't have to bother about getting in and out of trains. John wouldn't hear of it. He knew Audrey loved the snow. That is what they came up for and he wouldn't let a little accident put him off. Audrey must go out and enjoy herself. There must be a jolly crowd arriving for the carnival. Perhaps some one they knew. That Mrs. Oliphant from Boston,

who had been so friendly, knew everyone. She'd look after Audrey at the sports and chaperone her at the dances—if she thought she needed a chaperone?

"Audrey begged him to change his mind. To go away with her. Ironical, isn't it? If they had gone away as she wished, John might have never seen or heard of Hartman again. The entire affair would have passed into the limbo of forgotten dreams and all the terror, pain, grief and futility would have been avoided.

"Poor John! He insisted that they stay. You see, he was anxious to prove to himself that everything was all right. That everything should go on as usual. Audrey must go out and be gay. Finally Audrey agreed, kissed

him and left. In the lounge she ran into Mrs. Oliphant who was delighted to take her into her party that was going to see the bobsled races. Mrs. Oliphant was one of those angular females who seem rather haughty but possess none of the reserve their appearance implies. She had made it her business to become acquainted with all the competitors. Particularly those of good family. She was a walking combination of Burke's Peerage and the Almanach de Gotha, Audrey told me. As the French and Italian teams appeared at the starting place in turn, she busily pointed out the lesser

royalties who were competing or in attendance on the sports. The German team dragged its sled into the focus of Mrs. Oliphant's lorgnon. 'He is a good looking man. Remember him, Mrs. Fenton?'

"Audrey followed her gaze. Three of the Germans were average Teutonic types but the steersman was a handsome young blond chap who seemed to be in his middle twenties. Aristocratic face. Slightly aquiline nose. Wide set eyes. Beautiful teeth as he laughed at a remark from one of his comrades. Audrey looked at him with interest. Mrs. Oliphant repeated her question. 'Remember him?'

" 'I've never seen him before,' Audrey answered. 'Not that I can recollect.' Mrs. Oliphant was amazed. 'My dear! I'd recognize that man again if I'd only met him once in a black cellar at midnight! He was in the rescue party. You know. He's the one who climbed down for your husband. The Baron von Hartman.

Excellent family. His father is cousin to Prince Hohenberg. There they go!'

"Down the slide went the Germans and the combination team which John had trained with came to the starting point. Monsieur Godin had been pressed into service to replace John as steersman. Mrs. Oliphant squinted

at them through the lorgnon. She had no comment to make as she watched them arrange themselves on the bobsled. She turned her nose up at the Greek, a silent damnation. In the moment of quiet, Audrey's mind went back to John. She hated leaving him alone in the room, even for a few days. She wished that he would listen to her and go to the south of France where he could sit in the sun all day long. She hated seeing that strained look on his face again. It made her uneasy. She gave a start as Mrs. Oliphant nudged her with a gentle elbow.

"'Mrs. Fenton, may I present Baron von Hartman?' Audrey came out of her day dream to look into a pair of very blue eyes. They twinkled at her over mustaches that turned up at the ends as the baron smiled charmingly. He stopped to kiss the fingers she instinctively placed in his outstretched hand. Before Audrey could speak Mrs. Oliphant drowned them in a flood of small talk, all very complimentary to the baron. He blushed like a schoolboy, Audrey recalled. Now that they were close to, he seemed much younger than she had thought. Younger and even handsomer. Audrey wasn't the kind of woman to be carried away

by a flashing eye, but she checked the reproach she intended giving him for hitting

John. Under the bright sun he looked like a medieval knight in his padded steel helmet and metal elbow pieces as he turned at the judge's call to hear the results. The German team had made the fastest time. The Italian next. Both the French team and the mixed one from the inn had spilled at the same double-S corner. No one badly hurt. A few sprains and bruises.

"That was all the bobsledding for the day. After lunch the program called for fancy skating and a hockey game. The next day ski-ing and ski-joring races. The third and last day would be given over to trotting horse races on the ice in the morning, with the main event of the carnival, one-man bobsled races, in the afternoon. Dancing every evening, but on the third night it was to be a masquerade in the skating rink, with fire-works and so on. Quite an ambitious program, wasn't it?

"Audrey stopped in to see John at lunch time. She told him all about the races. He scarcely heard her. 'What a lovely creature she is!' he thought, as she gaily detailed the news of the morning. No need of cosmetics or make-up of any sort for this girl. She had never looked so beautiful. Her eyes were more the color of violets than ever. Pink cheeks. The mountain air was good for her. They must stay on as long

as they could. He thought that Audrey needed the change from her usual friends and surroundings. She

must mix with these people at the inn. From what he had seen of them before his accident they were a decent lot.

“Audrey wanted to have lunch with him. He laughed at her. She’d have years ahead of her with just his face across the dining table. She must go now and have a good time. They’d have tea together, at four-thirty. Dear John. He had such a simple, generous nature. His insistence on her having a good time was his undoing, you see.

“Audrey was greeted with hochs and prosits at the entrance to the dining room. The cheers were not for her she discovered, after standing for an embarrassed moment in the doorway. Toasts were being drunk to the winners of the bobsled race. She went to the little table John had reserved in a corner of the room. Mrs. Oliphant swooped down on her like a mothering hen. She thought it ridiculous to think of Audrey sitting alone. She must join them at the big table. The Germans were very amusing, to say nothing of the gay march ese who told such naughty stories of smart Roman society. Had she heard the one about the aged contessa and the young priest?

“As the two women reached the long table Baron von Hartman was giving an excellent imitation of an English hunting squire having a dispute with a farmer who insisted on shooting foxes. The broad accent of the farmer, the dropping of the G’s and the hunting vernacular of the squire left Audrey amazed at the man’s knowledge of English and Englishmen. He must

have gone to school in England, or at least had an English tutor. So many good German families brought up their children that way before the war.

"The Marchese della Robba began a story of a buxom peasant girl going to market driving a donkey loaded with a crate of young roosters. The point of it was lost in the clanging of a bell announcing the start of the figure skating. Baron von Hartman asked to be allowed to escort Audrey. She found him a charming companion. Amusing to listen to. Easy to look at. Though she didn't know it at the moment, an immediate bond had formed between them. A natural attraction."

"My God, George! You're not going to tell me that Audrey and Hartman fell in love!"

"Let me tell it my own way, Chilly. A bit at a time. I told you when we came in that I had never pieced the

whole thing together before. 1 think you'll find it easy to understand the reason for the mutual attraction. From the baron's side, he saw a gorgeous creature. Young. Beautiful. Intelligent. Married to a man whom the baron considered to be insane. From Audrey's standpoint, this was the first time in five years that she had met a man who had no neurosis. All of us who were in the war had a neurosis of some sort. Don't shake your head at me, Chilly. I include you. A lot of people who stayed at home acquired them, too, from strain or other cause. But this young fellow, a bright wit, and a damned fine physical specimen, didn't have a kinked nerve in his entire body. He must have been a

stimulating companion. She enjoyed the afternoon, watching the skating and listening to his amusing comments. Tea time came too quickly.

"Audrey hastened to John. He was waiting for her, trying to conceal his anxiety to have her with him. As they sat over the tea, her gaiety faded. She had that same sense of uneasiness. Something she couldn't explain to herself. It disturbed her frightfully. It was most likely the reaction from her afternoon's happiness. Subconsciously there must have been a comparison of John and Hartman. An intuitive knowledge of how

happy she could be with a man who was entirely well. "John noticed how quiet she had become. Was she bored with him, he wondered. He couldn't blame her if she was. After all, she'd had a thin time of it with him. He tried now to be amusing but somehow the effort fell flat. What could he do to entertain her? Doctor Dubois wouldn't allow him to get up for several days. He wished that he could ask Mrs. Oliphant to keep Audrey occupied. He made up his mind to one thing. She mustn't sit around in the room with him. Not even for tea. It would be too much like the days on end that Audrey had passed with him in England. He wondered how he could keep her away without her knowing it. He decided to tell Doctor Dubois that it upset his nerves to have even his wife in the room for more than a few minutes at a time. That would take care of matters until he could be up and around again. When Audrey left he sent for the doctor.

“Doctor Dubois agreed to John’s suggestion. As a matter of fact, he felt it to be an excellent arrangement. Despite John’s seemingly rational behavior, the doctor’s suspicions were increased by the intensity behind John’s request for solitude. There was something the man was concealing, the doctor thought. Something to do

with the screaming and struggling in the crevasse the night before. Doctor Dubois stroked his beard with both hands as he listened to John’s unconvincing explanations. Yes, he would arrange that with Mrs. Fenton.

“Audrey was going to dress before dinner when the doctor came into her sitting room. The feeling of mystery that had struck her the night before came back as she looked at his rippling beard. Why had he come, she wondered. What secrets had he hidden beneath that hairy shield. The doctor, after a few preliminaries, came to the point. Had Captain Fenton suffered from any illness recently? Particularly any mental illness? So many soldiers suffered from shell shock or something of that sort. Audrey told him that John had suffered a little memory lapse the previous year. It was as he had expected. His beard waved as he nodded his head. For that reason, the shock of this accident must have upset the captain just a little. The poor fellow didn’t realize it, but it would be best not to disturb him with long conversations for a few days. He should be left alone as much as possible. Just a moment morning and afternoon to say hello from the doorway of his

room. It would be better so, he said. Her body would not come in close proximity to the captain.

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“ ‘Very exciting/ the doctor said, looking at Audrey with the eye of a connoisseur as he got up to leave. ‘Entendu, madame. Do not worry about your husband. Amuse yourself. He gets better in a few days. Remember. Short visits! Au revoir, madame.’

“The doctor left, very pleased with himself. Poor John very pleased with himself. Baron von Hartman very pleased with himself. Everyone but Audrey. She was quite unhappy over John. Yet if her visits to him must be curtailed, she might as well be amused by the others, she told herself. She didn’t mean the others, really. She meant the baron. At dinner she found him seated on her left. It must have been arranged beforehand. He had brought a little bouquet of flowers wrapped in lace paper and gravely presented them to her. ‘Something you have forgotten, madame!’ Audrey opened the wrappings, wondering what he meant. There in the flowers was a glove. A woollen glove. The glove she had stuffed with snow to drop the note to John before she left the crevasse to get help. This man had found time in all the excitement on the icy ledge, to pick up a lady’s glove. Very gallant.

“He devoted himself to Audrey the entire evening. She found herself more thrilled than she would like to

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admit by the attention. The incident of the glove had impressed her, too. It would impress any woman. Besides, he danced so very well. All the new dances as

well as the waltz. In waltzing he held her just a little differently than anyone else had ever done. It was quite evident that he was badly smitten, as we used to say. When they sat down to rest at the end of a dance, Mrs. Oliphant leaned over and whispered to Audrey, ‘I see that you’re sinking another U-boat!’

“She laughed it off. Mrs. Oliphant would have her little joke. At the same time, it started her thinking. How strange it was that a few years ago the very mention of the man’s race would have been anathema. The man himself might have been lying in a trench with a rifle in his hand, exterminating her countrymen the same way as John had done to the other side. What was the use of the war? The hatred. The bloodshed. How futile it all was, whether in the name of Christ, King or Democracy. She wondered if he had been in the war. So many of the men who had, like John, never spoke about it. It must have been more terrible than she could imagine.

“ ‘May I dance with you again?’ She looked up. The baron was waiting. The music playing. So the

evening went. She had given almost every dance to this man she really knew nothing about. What’s more, she enjoyed it. The next day was similarly spent. Just a word to John twice a day. He seemed bright and cheery. Hoped she was having a good time. Too wonderful, she told him, happily.

“The morning of the third day of the carnival the baron was busy. He was entered in the one-man bob-sled race, so Audrey was left with Mrs. Oliphant and

some of the others. She missed being with him. Understand, George, this was no common flirtation. It was one of those rare cases, perhaps once in fifty thousand times, where two beings from opposite poles will meet and feel instinctively that they belong to each other. It is something too difficult to explain the why and wherefore of. The fact remains that the average marriage is based on physical attraction that, with luck, grows into a lasting union. The exceptional cases go much deeper than that. I don't think Audrey realized any of this. While she was intelligent, she wasn't analytical nor introspective.

"After tea, Mrs. Oliphant gave each one of her group a rolled package—their costume for the skating masquerade which could be worn over their clothes and discarded

when they came in to dance after the fireworks display was over. None were to reveal their costumes to the others until they met in the skating rink. Audrey could scarcely wait to see what had been selected for her. In her own room she opened the package. It contained a long piece of cotton cloth with a hole in the center to put her head through. Not very thrilling, Audrey thought. She turned it inside out. There, on the white cotton, was the Queen of Hearts printed in gay colors. Just like a playing card. That was the idea. Since all the packages were the same size, each one would represent a card. There was a face mask too, with a little cardboard crown. How amusing, she thought,

wondering what the others would be. What would the baron wear?

“After dinner they slipped away separately to the skating rink, mysteriously robing themselves in dark corners. Audrey skated around looking for the others. There was the usual collection of apaches, Napoleons, Spanish grandees, pierrots, et cetera. She saw a tall man go by searching for some one. The King of Spades. Was that the baron? She wondered. She collided with the Queen of Clubs, who said, ‘Dammit.’ That was Mrs. Oliphant, she was sure. From behind her a figure

came, putting its arms around her waist and sweeping down the ice with her. The Knave of Hearts. She knew who it was. He whispered,

“ ‘The Queen of Hearts
She made some tarts
All on a summer’s day—’

She took up the line.

“ ‘The Knave of Hearts
He stole the tarts,
And hid them all away!’

Around they went to the strains of the music, too happy to say another word.

“John had taken an early dinner that night, sitting on a chaise longue so that he could see out of the

French windows. In a few days he'd be around again, even if he had to hobble on a crutch. The crowd of carnival visitors would be gone and he and Audrey would pick things up again. In the meantime, he was happy that she was enjoying herself, thanks to Mrs. Oliphant. He dropped the book he was reading and shut off the light next to the lounge. He wanted to see the stars come out, a lovely sight the nights there was no moon. In a

few minutes through his partly opened window he heard the music from the skating rink. He wondered how Audrey was dressed. She hadn't known in the afternoon what her costume would be. Perhaps she'd stop in before the dance and let him see how lovely she looked.

"In a few minutes he fell asleep in the darkened room. At eight o'clock, without any preliminary warning, the fireworks started with the bursting of smoke bombs and rockets cleaving the sky. John woke up with a start. He had entirely forgotten the firework display. As he saw the sky light up something snapped in his mind. He was back in the war again. Hartman was coming for him. He made out the line of spectators watching the pyrotechnic exhibit to be the advancing troops of the enemy coming over the snow. He was in a black dugout without any weapons! No one had mended the wire! He began screaming for help. No one came. He screamed in a frenzy. The enemy was creeping up on him!

“Gustave, the under-porter who had been looking after him, finally heard his cries and came running. Gustave opened the door. John was sitting on the lounge, shaking from head to foot, a terrible look in his

face. As he saw Gustave’s face in the crack of light from the hallway, John seized the lamp and threw it at him. Gustave closed the door and ran for Doctor Dubois. The doctor was not to be found. Gustave ran to the ice rink, standing in the center and shouting, ‘Mrs. Fenton! Mrs. Fenton!’ over the sounds of the music.

“Audrey was doing some waltz figures, the baron’s arm around her waist. The baron heard Gustave and steered Audrey over to where the man was calling. She asked him what was the matter. Who wanted her? Gustave had lost his English in the excitement. All he could say was, ‘Your husband! He’s lost his head!’ Audrey was unable to understand him for the moment. The baron spoke to him rapidly in French. Audrey’s alarm increased as she listened to the two men. ‘I must go to him at once!’ she said.

“She stooped to remove her skates. The baron was reluctant to let her go as he knelt at her feet, taking her skates off. He would go himself to find Doctor Dubois and see that the captain was taken care of. Audrey wouldn’t listen. She rushed away, followed by Hartman as soon as his own skates were removed. They forgot about their fancy costumes, except to remove their face masks when Gustave called. She ran towards the

inn, her gay surplice streaming out behind. The baron followed, Gustave panting after. People laughed as they passed. Thought it was a game of some sort.

“The baron reached John’s room to find Audrey standing in the open doorway. What she saw of John had paralyzed her for the moment. John was screaming and gibbering. ‘Audrey! Get help! They’re coming for me! Help me get away!’ The baron stepped behind her to ask if he could help. At his touch she turned to him with a grateful look. John saw him and the look at the same time. ‘Get away! Get away!’ he shrieked. ‘George! Davey! Help me! He’s here again!’ Audrey went towards him to quiet him, forcing herself to appear calm. ‘John! John, what’s wrong? Tell me!’

“He waved her aside, watching the baron who had come into the room, closing the door to shut out the curious crowd that had collected in the hall. ‘Who is this man? What does he want here?’ I can’t tell you what John looked like as he spoke. Audrey described it as being too horrible. Nothing of the man she had married. She tried to answer him, unconsciously falling into the usual form of introduction.

“ ‘My husband—Baron von Hartman.’

“John sprung to his feet, looking wildly around the room for a weapon. His weight was too much for the injured ankle and he collapsed to his knees. The baron tried to help him to his feet but John hit him a blow that sent him half way across the room.

“ ‘I know what you’re here for. You’ve come to take my wife away from me! You won’t get her, do you hear me? I’ll kill you all first! This is the fourth time you’ve come. The last time, I tell you!’ The baron told Audrey to go for Doctor Dubois. To bring Gustave and another porter back with her. She was afraid to leave him alone with John. He forced her out the door.

“What went on between the two men the baron told Audrey later. After she left the room, John drowned him with frenzied questions. Who was he? Where did he come from? What did he want? Why did he come? Did he think he could take his wife away from him? He asked many other things the baron couldn’t understand. If he had been a soldier? When the baron said, ‘No,’ John called him a liar. He could prove that he’d been a soldier and went on to a lot of gibberish about killing him. Finally John sprung over to the dressing table and tried to get his revolver out of the drawer.

The baron seized his wrist. No telling how the struggle might have ended if Audrey hadn’t returned with the doctor and the porters. The doctor took charge, a grim satisfaction on his face as he found his first diagnosis of John to be correct. Ordering the baron and Audrey out of the room, he had the porters tie John down to the couch until he should get a bit calmer. It was quite a job, I can tell you. John was so strong and quick, but the bad ankle handicapped him.

“Audrey was heart-broken. It was a terrible blow to the girl. Away from everyone she knew, on a mountain

in Switzerland, with a madman for a husband. No one to turn to but the baron, who tried to comfort her. She couldn't understand John. Saying that the baron had come to take his wife away. He had never been jealous of her before. He had begged her to go and be amused. Now he was acting like a fiend about it. What should she do? There was no use sending for John's father or mother. She got the idea of sending for me."

Chapter Fourteen

"THE WIRE SAID, 'Imperative that you come at once. We both need you badly. Audrey? I couldn't imagine what had happened. I applied to the A. D. M. S. for leave. When he said I could go, I wired Iris to meet me at the Schweizerhof in St. Moritz. She'd be of some help to Audrey, whatever was wrong. Iris had just written me about the marvelous times the Fentons were having in Switzerland and wishing we could join them. Here was our chance. All the way down to St. Moritz I wondered what could have happened. There was no possible reason for a recurrence of the former attacks, as far as I could see. Could they have had a domestic upset? I ruled that out. They always seemed an ideally mated couple. I recalled their wedding day in Canterbury. What a lovely bride she was, coming through the lane of upraised swords! The old woman who croaked about the sword going through the bridal bouquet came vividly before me. Nonsense. I didn't believe in soothsayers. Iris was just as puzzled when we met. We took a motor up to Kranzberg.

"Audrey fell weeping into Iris' arms. We went to her room, anxious to find out what was wrong. You see, it was ten days since her wire reached me and a lot had happened in that time. John had grown worse. Very few lucid moments. She told us what had happened, blaming herself for it. If she hadn't listened to him this wouldn't have occurred. She had joined

some gay people as he wanted her to, one of the men had paid her a little attention and the first time John had seen him, he became a raving maniac. The man had been perfectly charming ever since. Dreadfully sorry for what had happened. Kind and understanding. He had been nothing more than a pleasant acquaintance.

“ ‘Who was he?’ Iris asked, with the privilege of old friendship. ‘An Englishman?’

“ ‘No. A German. Baron Waldemar von Hartman.’

“I almost fell out of my chair. Surely there must have been a mistake! Still, Audrey couldn’t be having hallucinations the same as John. I asked her if he had been a soldier. If he had been in the war. She looked at me strangely. John had asked the same things. Asa matter of fact, he hadn’t been in the army. The baron had told her that some years before he had gone in for

geology because he was too young for the war. They had put him into a scientific section, scouring the mountains of Bavaria looking for minerals that could be used in munition making. He didn’t want to talk about the war. Before she knew that, she asked him if he had ever been wounded. He looked like a soldier. He had thought for a long moment before answering her. ‘No, madame, but I feel as if in the war I died many times.’ He wouldn’t speak any more of the war. His father had forbidden it to be spoken of by any of the family.

“I sat back in my chair again. After all, why shouldn’t there be more Hartmans as well as more

Jones or Smiths or Browns? I'd see the man myself without saying anything to Audrey before I spoke to John. Making an excuse, I went outside, leaving the two women talking. In the lounge I found the manager of the inn. I introduced myself as a friend of Captain Fenton, and arranged for a bedroom and sitting-room for us. That was easily done. Very few guests remained. Making it appear as if I knew him very well, I casually asked if Baron von Hartman was in his room. If so, I should like to see him.

"The manager glanced at me suspiciously. His professional smile became a frozen mask as he narrowed his

eyes at me before replying. 'The baron left very suddenly two days ago. Just after your telegram from Paris to Madame Fenton. Didn't you know?'

"Obviously I didn't know. I was on the point of damning his impertinence when the thought came to me that he knew the contents of all the telegrams that went in or out of the house. As I stood there, unable to decide what to do next, another thought disturbed me. Why had Hartman left so abruptly when he knew of our coming? Had he anything to fear? Would I have seen through him, I mean in the figurative sense? Would I have found him to be a man or a ghost? It was a silly idea, that last one. Audrey would know if he was one or the other. The only thing to do now was to see John. I called a page boy to show me up to Captain Fenton's room. It was Doctor Dubois' orders that no visitors be allowed. Doctor Dubois had gone to

Lucerne for a few days. It took five francs and a lot of persuasion to convince the lad that I was a doctor too, so I didn't count as a visitor.

"When we got to the room, the door opened slowly in response to our knock. The under-porter Gustave was on duty. I looked around the room for John. No sign of him. I noticed a high backed wing chair turned

to the wall. Gustave pointed to it, nodding his head at the same time. I walked across the room. John was sitting there motionless. I leaned over and touched him on the shoulder, half expecting him to jump up. He looked up, then surprised me by saying, 'You've been a long time coming, George.' There was a tone of childish complaint in his voice that had never been there before.

"I echoed his words. 'A long time coming?' 'Yes,' he answered simply. 'I've been calling for you day after day. Where is Davey?' Poor devil. Rethought Major Boyne was still alive. I sat down and humored him. Lit my pipe. Told him how well he looked. How nice the inn was. John smiled blandly, accepting it all with a childlike complacency. Not a bit of the madman I had been told to expect."

"I've seen cases like that, George. All calm sailing for awhile. Then the storm breaks loose. We had a fellow at Bart's who, after a sensible discussion of his case with the chief neurologist, suddenly turned and kicked the doctor in the seat of his pants as he was going out of the room."

“I know. John went on quietly enough for a short time. Then he beckoned to me to come closer. He

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whispered in my ear, ‘Is Gustave still here?’ I looked. The man was sitting near the door, reading a book. I told John that. ‘Send him to hell out of here,’ he answered. I got Gustave out of the room. The closing of the door brought John to his feet. His ankle was nearly well, but he insisted on using a heavy walking stick. It was allowed him, I found out, because after the first attempt to get his revolver to shoot Hartman, he had shown no signs of using physical violence. He laughed at the top of his lungs, a frightening sound. It seemed that he always sat hidden in the big chair when anyone was in the room so they wouldn’t know what he was thinking. Then he searched the room thoroughly before returning to where I sat. He whispered, ‘Have you seen him?’

“ ‘Who?’

“ ‘Hartman. He’s come back again. I know why.’

“‘Ridiculous. He can’t come back, John. He’s finished. You’re imagining it,’ I told him. Then he started telling me what you already know. About the ski-ing trip and the accident. The meeting on the floor of the crevasse with Hartman. The discovery that he had come to revenge himself by taking Audrey away.

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In the week that I spent with him, he told me the same story every day. That’s why I can remember it so well. He told it without a word’s variation. His mind was just as it had been after the time Boyne died. Part of

the brain cells receptive while others were practically dormant. He told me how the war tried to come into his room. That shells burst and Very lights went up just outside his window. When he had called for reenforcements after the enemy troops were advancing the telephone wires were cut and they had outflanked him, playing the Queen of Hearts.

“ ‘Hearts were trumps,’ he said, quite seriously. ‘All red, black and white.’ Audrey must have played the red queen. Her face looked over the top of the card at him. ‘Then they played the Knave of Hearts. Hartman’s face looked over that. The knave took the queen. That wasn’t good bridge, was it?’ He appealed to me. ‘What would the Bath Club committee say to play like that?’ When he tried to stop the play with his revolver, to shoot the face of Hartman off the card, he saw the gold signet ring again. He knew it well. The head of a unicorn arising from a coronet. The unicorn knew him well, too, he said. It sort of whinnied at him in recognition, the way the brown mare always did. He

felt that he should reciprocate the attention by patting its head and offering it a carrot or a lump of sugar. When he reached for it there had been a struggle and he was tied to the lounge.”

“Interesting fantasia, George.”

“Perhaps so, Chilly, taken objectively. Quite another matter hearing it from the lips of a dear friend. There was no doubt in my mind. The man was gone. Totally gone. I don’t know whom I felt most sorry for —John or Audrey. Perhaps she was the greater

sufferer, being sane. John's mind wasn't clear enough for suffering. It was evident that his insanity had taken a childish form and would stay that way unless he was confronted with Hartman. Hartman hadn't come into the room again. John thought he heard him outside the door, waiting to see if Audrey would come out so that he could steal her away. I had to open the door and look out. No one was there but Gustave. Audrey hadn't been in to see him either. He had arranged that with Doctor Dubois. She must go out and have a good time with the others. Then Hartman couldn't get her. Great girl, Audrey. He'd be all right in a few days and he'd sack Doctor Dubois. He didn't like his beard. There were spiders in

it. Spiders and the Knave of Hearts. Hartman.

"I couldn't stand hearing any more. Telling him I'd be back later, I called Gustave in and left. All I could think of was what the poor man's brain had gone through. What pain. What suffering. Hartman's coming back was bad enough, but that John should think that he had to give up his wife—! Audrey's eyes were living question marks when I rejoined the women. I couldn't bring myself to speak. She knew what I couldn't say. It looked as if she would faint. I put my arms around her. Iris gave her a whiff of smelling salts. In a moment Audrey was sobbing convulsively on my shoulder.

"I told Iris to get her to bed, while I went to our rooms to unpack. How I wished that either Doctor Dubois or Baron von Hartman were there so I could

get to the inside of this matter. Waldemar von Hartman. The identity disc which I had seen hanging from John's saddle wallets in 1914 had been marked W. von Hartman, I suddenly remembered. I pinched myself. Was I getting like that, too? Yet there was no denying it. There had always been a W. von Hartman. John had told me so each time. Now when I had the chance to meet the fellow face to face, he had vanished. Perhaps

Doctor Dubois could help me. I wanted to get John moved as soon as possible and I needed his permission. John was his patient.

"It was a strange holiday for us. Audrey felt so badly. She wanted to do something to help John. He didn't want her to come into his room until he was better. He still thought she was having a good time. After several days I took her along with us on a little excursion. We made her talk about other things than John. About the other guests who had been at the inn. I was hopeful that I'd get some useful clue about Hartman. She told us about Mrs. Oliphant. About the Italian marchese. About Doctor Dubois. She said nothing of the Baron until Iris asked some questions about him. How old was he? About twenty-two or three, Audrey answered. I checked up rapidly. He would have been seventeen or eighteen at the beginning of the war. The gunner officer whom John had sabered in 1914 must have been older than that. Of course, I had seen him through my field glasses a long way off. Besides, the German army didn't put one pip

on the shoulders of kids that weren't dry behind the ears and send them out to command grown men the way we did. Not that our youngsters weren't great

lads. To me they were the wonder of the war." "Amazing, wasn't it? I've seen the brats strut before a platoon of veterans, trying to stroke the few hairs on their upper lips into mustaches. Or telling off a sergeant whose breast was rainbowed with service ribbons. God bless them, I say. We were lucky to have them rather than these modern youths who impudently sit in their colleges and pass resolutions not to fight for King or Country. Little swine! Gutless herrings, we have now, George. What's the world coming to? Everything men did is taboo. These fellows don't want to fight, or make love to women or marry. Inverts. Perverts. Not very encouraging, is it?"

"It's only a phase, Chilly. They'll get over it. The youth of England is sound inside. We'll go into that another time. Where was I? Oh, yes. Hartman's age led me all around the barn, didn't it? Audrey kept talking about him. I noticed that she relaxed for the first time since we had come as she told us how splendid he was on the bobsleds. How well he ski-ed. How graceful he looked on skates. A bit of color flushed her cheeks. I began to wonder if John wasn't wiser than he knew when he said that Hartman wanted to take his wife away from him.

"Audrey caught my eye. She must have read my thoughts. Her face turned crimson. It was the first time

she realized that Hartman interested her. She stopped talking and asked us to take her home. She talked of John all the way back. Defensive mechanism, you know. She went to her room directly we finished dinner. Iris and I sat in the lounge listening to the music. The orchestra was playing one of our favorite pieces—'If You Could Care for Me'—that Delysia was singing in *As You Were*.

"Suddenly a great dark beard shut out my view of the musicians. Is was Doctor Dubois, introducing himself to me. Above the beard was a fine sharp nose and piercing eyes. No fool, this man, was my impression. We left Iris in the lounge and went out on the terrace of the inn, walking up and down in the bracing air of the Alps. He ridiculed the idea that John had killed the same man Hartman three times. Hallucinations, he called it. Of this Hartman he knew nothing. The baron never spoke of himself. Never. Dubois talked on. Most of what he said about John you already know. The attack on the baron in the crevasse. His shell shock at the fireworks. His jealousy of the baron. 'After all,'he continued, 'the baron is a very nice young man. But very

young. Perhaps a little in love with the charming Mrs. Fenton. What young man wouldn't be?' He sighed and stroked his beard, regretful of his years. He went on to say that everything had been innocent between them. Those are his words, not mine. That the servants always knew what went on. You can't fool the servants.

“We went into a long discussion of what was the best thing to be done with John. I was for taking him back to England. Doctor Dubois thought that a sanatorium pleasantly situated on the Riviera would be better. He told me of one near Juan-les-Pins and its method of treatment. I had to agree with him. Gustave would be sent along. John seemed to pay attention to him. We would go to Audrey the next morning and make the arrangements.

“We went to visit John together. As usual, he seemed glad to see me, taking no notice of Doctor Dubois except to call out ‘Beaver!’ as we came into the room. John had forgotten that I had ever been to see him before. The poor devil. He started to tell me his whole story again. I was so tired of hearing it. You know how repetition gets on one’s nerves? I stopped him by telling about the trip we had planned for him. Whoever

does the advertising for the Riviera should have booked me for a lecture, or at least to write a travel pamphlet on the Cote d’Azur. I did it well, if I say so myself.

“By the time I had finished, John brightened perceptibly. ‘Lovely, lovely,’ he kept murmuring. Then he thought of Audrey. She was having a good time. He didn’t want to take her away from it. She could have a good time in France, too, I told him. He smiled again, just like a child with a new toy, as he whispered to me. ‘France! That’s good. No German can follow us there. If he does, Papa Joffre will call out his army. They’re

sitting in taxi-cabs and busses now. Under the chestnut trees in the Bois? He told me this confidentially, looking around to see if the doctor and Gustave were listening. We sent him to bed happy.

"Audrey agreed with everything we said the next day. She seemed very pleased at the idea of going. Anything that would be for John's good would be satisfactory to her. Iris and Audrey helped each other with their packing. I heard them gossiping or laughing as I went in and out of the rooms. It was the first time Audrey had been cheerful since our arrival. Everything seemed fine. I completed our plans. My time

had almost expired, and since John and Audrey were starting at eight that night by bus for Pontresina, we decided to leave on the six o'clock bus for St. Moritz instead of going to Samaden. Doctor Dubois would go down with them, so there was no point in our staying just to see them safely off. We could have two days in Paris if we got to St. Moritz on time.

"Our bus was ready at five forty-five. Our luggage was taken out and stowed. The servants were tipped. Audrey came to say good-bye. Of course the two women had to weep over each other a bit, and promised to meet soon again. When Iris was settled in the bus, I turned for a final word with Audrey. It hurt me to leave her alone with John. I cheered her up a bit by saying that a few weeks might see a difference in John's condition. That I'd bring some pressure to bear on the sanatorium by getting an official letter sent from the D. M. S. which would ensure special attention.

“As I turned to climb into the bus, I saw a page boy standing nearby with a telegram in his hand. I called to him, asking if it was for me? ‘No, monsieur.’ I said good-bye to Audrey. The bus rattled off. We looked back to her, waving our hands. She wasn’t looking at us. The page boy was standing next to her and

she was reading a piece of paper, evidently a telegram. If I had only known what was in it! What a difference it would have made even then! When it was long too late I found out that the telegram had come from the baron. He would be at the inn at seven-thirty that night. The difference of one and a half hours finished one life and gave two others a new start.”

Chapter Fifteen

"AUDREY HAD a bad quarter of an hour after we left. Imagine her situation. About to go away with a man who was out of his mind, who needed to be cared for like a child. Another man, sane and strong, coming to see her. They would scarcely have time to say hello before they said good-bye. She knew there was no choice. Her duty, her love for John put everything else out of the question. She would not let herself think of anything else. There was something about the coming arrival that made her heart miss its regular beat. She tried to put it from her mind. Why could life be so cruel? To play such pranks with innocent people? She had heard and read of triangles. She never knew that a triangle was more than a mathematical expression. Now she found it to be a three-edged, three-pointed sword held by three people and that it cut and pierced at every move. She wouldn't let herself think of the future, if there could ever be a future. Though we hadn't said so, she felt certain that there could be no permanent cure for John. She'd never leave him. Her mind

fully made up, she busied herself gathering odds and ends to put in her bag. The thought came to her that the baron might be late. That she would be gone before he got there. There was nothing to be done about it. After all, she was John's wife.

“She went in to see John. She had scarcely spoken to him since that scene with the baron. Following Doctor Dubois’ orders, she had only looked in on him each day for a moment. Now she went to see that all his things had been put together. Gustave had done everything well. But just to be sure, she opened the cupboards to see if anything was forgotten.

“John, who had been sitting quietly in his usual chair, came across the room without making a sound. From behind, he threw his arms around her, drawing her to him suddenly. She gave an instinctive scream of fright as he kissed her. Audrey turned in his arms to face him. There was a queer light in his eyes. She stayed quite still in his arms, trying to control her fear as she smiled up at him. His arms relaxed. He asked her one question. ‘Is there anyone here you care for more than you do me?’

“She laughed at him. ‘Of course not, silly!’

“She thought quickly. Was she being honest? After

all, it wasn’t a lie. The baron wasn’t there. Besides, did she care more for him than she did for John? She couldn’t answer that. She didn’t want to think of it. She looked at the clock. Seven-twenty. She’d have time to run down to the ski house and settle with Monsieur Godin for the rental of skis and skates.

“It took a little longer than she expected. Monsieur Godin, with true Gallic accuracy, had to compute the damage done to the skis John wore when he had his accident. She must verify the account with him. She wanted to throw her purse on the bench and run. It was

the rule of the inn that patrons must check all their bills. Monsieur Godin was methodical. So many metres of spruce at so much a metre. So many centimetres of strap at so much a centimetre. So much glue. So much labor. A pourboire for the workman. Thanks for madame and best wishes for monsieur le capitaine!

"When she got to the steps of the inn the bus had discharged its passengers and was leaving. It would be back in half an hour to take her away with John. The baron was not in sight. Perhaps he hadn't come after all. She hurried up the steps and into the lounge. A page boy stopped her. The baron had arrived and was inquiring for her. He had gone upstairs looking.

Should he come down? She gave the boy a coin, dismissing him. She would go upstairs herself to find him.

"She ran the three flights. On the top step she rested for a moment to recover her breath. She couldn't appear like a schoolgirl just off the hockey field. As she powdered her nose, her tiny mirror showed the baron coming towards her. He kissed her hand. He was happy to see her. He was sorry to have left so suddenly. His father hadn't been well. How was Captain Fenton? He hoped much better. They walked down the hall as he told her all this. They stopped in front of John's door before Audrey could speak. Her lips mutinied. They wouldn't form the words she wanted to use. She found herself saying in a flat,

toneless voice, ‘We are going away in a few minutes. We had better say goodbye.’

“He looked at her in amazement. ‘Going away? Say good-bye? There can be no good-bye for us.’

“She held out her hand to him. She tried to keep from tears. ‘Good-bye.’

“He took her hand and kissed it again.

“John had been left alone for a moment by Gustave. He evidently heard the voices in the hall and thought it was Audrey and the porters coming for the luggage.

He opened the door. Fully dressed for the traveling, the big walking stick in his hand, he stood rigid as he saw the baron raise his head after kissing Audrey’s hand.

“The baron and Audrey saw him at the same time. For an instant it looked as if John was going to faint. His face turned the color of wax. He swayed forward. Both Audrey and the baron started forward to help him. It seemed to galvanize John into action. He spun around on his heel and ran back into the room, the others following. He rushed directly to the French doors opening on their little balcony, with one blow of his heavy stick smashing the frame. The baron seized one of his arms, but John flung himself free and stumbled out onto the balcony, crashing into the heavy wooden railing. Before anyone could prevent it, he toppled over the railing and had gone, falling the three stories to the ground. They found him dead. Half of his bones broken. One strange thing. There was a smile on his lips. Poor John. His troubles were over.”

“Do you think he killed himself, George?”

“I do, Chilly. While one can’t be certain, at least I like to think he did. John was always capable of a gallant gesture. When he saw Audrey and the baron together outside of his door, something must have told

him that life held nothing more for him. When they told me he was smiling in death, I felt that in the moment of sanity that must have come as he fell from the balcony to the ground, John knew that the way would be cleared for Audrey’s happiness.”

“I dare say you’re right, George. Audrey and John were two people who sacrificed themselves, each to make the other happy. But she told you in the street that she was rushing to Switzerland to meet her husband. Whom did she marry?”

“Baron Waldemar von Hartman. One year later.”

“Then he really wasn’t a ghost, this man with four lives?”

“Hardly. Audrey wrote to us. We went to visit them in Germany after the first child was born. A boy. They named him after John. Rather odd, wasn’t it, that the child the Fentons wanted so badly was a little German boy. The lad that Fuzzy and his dear old wife had looked forward to having was a chubby blond kid with wide set blue eyes and a charming smile.”

“But tell me about the father. Baron von Hartman. What kind of a person was he?”

“Charming. Just as Audrey had described him. Perfectly charming. They were living in a tremendous,

rambling schloss, surrounded by a great park of trees. It had been a medieval fortress with thick stone walls and buttresses. His father and mother were with them, adoring Audrey, the child and their son, Waldemar. Their only son. Audrey was happy. She had the child she wanted so badly, the child of a man she loved. The baron was madly in love with her and proud of his baby. I talked about John only once with Audrey. There was nothing more to be said.

"His father, the Count Wernher von Hartman, showed me around the schloss, pointing out with pride the things that had been in the family's possession since the time of Charlemagne. The family quarterings on faded parchment under glass in the library and carved in stone over the fireplace in the great hall. Old manuscripts. Old jewels.

"The day before we left, I was poking around in the old chapel, the old count holding forth in the same precise English as his son, on the art of stone cutting in the Middle Ages. Turning quickly to look at the piece of work he was pointing out as an example, my elbow struck an old church vestment hanging in a dark corner of the wall. To my amazement, I heard the noise of breaking glass, slivers of which fell at my feet. I looked at the

vestment, then lifted it up. Underneath was a large framed picture, its glass broken by my elbow. I looked at it closely. In the dim light that fell on it from the lamp burning above the chapel altar, I saw the photograph of four young Germans. Blond. Tall.

Handsome. The three older ones in officers' uniform. The youngest in the uniform of a cadet. The father shook his head sadly, taking the vestment out of my hands and covering the picture again.

" 'My four boys. Wilhelm. Wolfgang. Walter. Waldemar. We have only Waldemar left. Our baby. The others died in the war.' The old man's hand shook as he rested it on my shoulder, a tear in his kind old eyes as he spoke again. 'Perhaps you suffered the loss of some dear one too?'

"I thought of John, my dear friend John, and nodded my head.

" 'Come, come, Colonel Forrester. Let us not speak of sad things. I have broken a rule. In this house it is forbidden to speak of the war. We have life before us. Young life in the house. Young love in the heart. And perhaps our dear Audrey will give us more lives to make up for all we have lost.'

"He put his arm through mine and we walked out of

the chapel. I couldn't speak until we got back to his library and had a drink."

"My word, George! Amazing! Did you tell

Audrey?"

"No, Chilly. There was no use opening the thing up again. She was happy with her baby and Waldemar. She would never know. I didn't even tell Iris. You are the only one who has ever heard the whole thing."

Chilton got to his feet. He reached for the whiskey bottle and slowly poured a drink, adding a little soda without saying a word. Then raised his glass to the

level of his eyes, staring at the bubbles as if trying to make up his mind what to say.

“I want to propose a toast, George. The health of John. The new John. John Fenton von Hartman!”

I filled my glass and we drank. I proposed a toast.

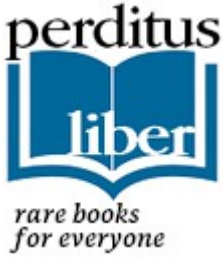
“The sons. The old sons. The new sons. English. German. French. The sons that did. The sons that will do!”

We drank to that.

Then Chilton proposed the last toast. With all it implied.

“Gentlemen—the King!”

——— FINIS ———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